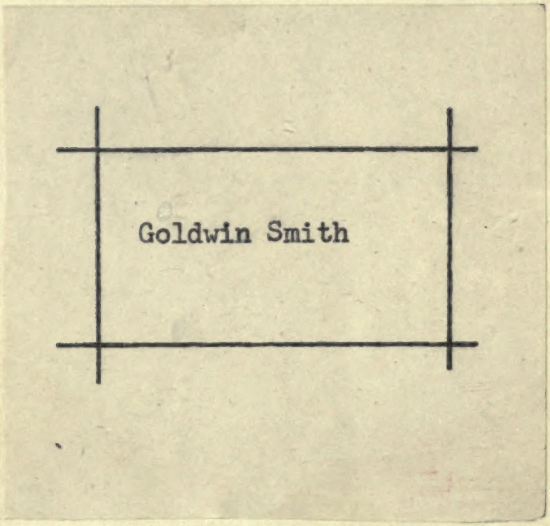
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A HISTORY

OF THE

COMMONWEALTH OF FLORENCE,

FROM

THE EARLIEST INDEPENDENCE OF THE COMMUNE
TO THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC IN 1531.

BY

T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF "THE GIRLHOOD OF CATHERINE DE' MEDICI," "THE LIFE OF FILIPPO STROZZI," "PAUL THE FRIAR AND PAUL THE POPE," ETC.

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Of course the courtly writers of the time, and their followers, represent the death of Lorenzo as the setting of a sun, which left all darkness behind it. But we have the less suspected testimony of Guicciardini, writing what was not to see the light during his lifetime, and what in fact never did see the light till quite recently, to the effect that Lorenzo's premature death was much lamented at Florence. Those of the leading families who had been openly opposed to him, and consequently kept down by him, and prevented from taking any share in the honours and emoluments of office, were of course not sorry for his removal, though there was no immediate prospect that their position would be in any wise improved by it. But many besides his own friends and adherents, many even of those who had been discontented with his government, were, says Guicciardini, sorry for his death, "because they knew not what the change of circumstances might have in store for them." The people at large, and especially the populace, grieved for him because he had kept the city "in continual abundance, and in a succession of pleasures, amusements, and festivals." By all classes of literary men, and artists throughout Italy, his death was felt as a calamity. For of those in Tuscany there was hardly one that did not, more or less, profit by his patronage. And such as inhabited the other cities of Italy, as Guicciardini says, were injured, inasmuch as while Lorenzo lived, the princes of other

courts felt that if they did not treat the artists about them generously, they would be deserted by those courtly ornaments in favour of a patron who was sure to receive them with open arms. Thus the feeling of regret for Lorenzo may be said to have been general, and when the news that "The Magnificent,"—Il Magnifico, as he was often called without other adjunct,—was dead, reached Florence, a very palpable gloom was cast over the city, which could certainly better have spared a better man. A.D. 1492.

Lorenzo left three sons: Piero, his successor in the now scarcely disguised principality, born in 1471, now therefore twenty-one years of age; Giovanni, born in 1574, who had at sixteen years of age received from Pope Innocent VIII., his sister Maddalena's father-in-law, the hat of a Cardinal a few months only before Lorenzo's death, and who afterwards became Pope Leo X.; and lastly, Giuliano, known subsequently as the Duke of Nemours, who, born in 1479, was only twelve years old at the time of his father's death.

Florence grieved for the prince who had at least made life in Florence very pleasant for all those who were contented to eat, drink, and be merry in peace and plenty under a Medicean absolute sovereign. But her grief was not such as to prevent her from hurrying in true monarchic fashion to pay her court to the deceased monarch's successor. The Medici is dead! Long live the Medici! It had come to that in Florence. And all the well-affected world hastened to offer its congratulations to the youthful Piero, who was called at the same age that his father had reached when he began to govern the Republic, to so great and brilliant a succession.

But Pietro was a very different man in almost all respects from his father; that is to say, he was entirely deficient in all those personal and superficial graces and brilliant qualities which had dazzled those who came into

A.D. 1492. contact with Lorenzo. I am not aware that he had any valuable gift or merit of any sort, of all those which were wanting to his father, to compensate for the absence of all that was attractive, save strong health, which Lorenzo had never enjoyed, and those habits of bodily activity which resulted from it. He had, indeed, a pleasing voice and graceful delivery, which Lorenzo had not; but the qualities of his mind were such as to render this advantage of no value. He had inherited from his mother, Clarice, all the feudal pride of an Orsini. Lorenzo, with all his determination to rule, to place himself above the law, and to be superior to his fellow-citizens, had yet been essentially what the Florentines call "civil." The word being in their mouths nearer to its etymological root, had a stronger and more suggestive meaning, as will be readily apprehended, than it bears at the present day. It included in it much of the sense which we attach to the word "civic." The *civility* which rendered Lorenzo personally popular in Florence was not only urbanity, but such urbanity as decently maintained the fiction that those with whom he conversed were his equals. The phrase implied to the Florentine mind all the difference between the manners which might be expected to be fitting for a citizen speaking to his fellow-citizens, and those which might be supposed to characterize a military and feudal chieftain addressing his vassals. Now Piero was not "civil" in his manners with the Florentines. He was rough, brusque, and haughty, apt to give way to bursts of passion, and under the influence of rage to do and say things which, to the eminently gentle and courteous Florentines were far more intolerable than violations of the constitutional law, and which very shortly injured his popularity, and brought more odium upon him than the worst tyranny of his father had incurred.* It is curious to observe the

* Nardi. Istorie della Città di Firenze, di Jacopo Nardi, 2 vols. 8vo.

terms in which this part of Pietro's character is alluded to by Guicciardini in the dialogue which has been quoted in the foregoing chapter. The words are put into the mouth of Piero Capponi. Lorenzo, he has been saying, was a tyrant, but at least a prudent and pleasant-mannered tyrant. "But what could be expected from Piero, who besides being as deficient in prudence, as we all know, did not possess the goodness of nature and sweetness of temperament * which marked his father and his grandfather, and which is generally common among our people. Nor was it to be wondered at that it should be so, inasmuch as having been born of a foreign mother,† the Florentine blood was bastardized in him, and had degenerated to foreign manners, and a style too haughty and insolent for our habits of life." ‡ A.D. 1492.

Even the excellences which Pietro possessed were not of a kind calculated to win for him the affections of his eminently civic and civil subjects. He was great in all athletic sports — one of the first wrestlers of his day, a mighty player at the great ball,§ and victor in such contests over the best players in Italy, who were wont to come to Florence to try their strength and skill against him. The nature of the Florentine mind inclines it to feel admiration and respect for clever policy, even when employed against the liberties of Florence; but Piero was devoid of any such quality. With the exception of openly and undisguisedly seizing every opportunity of brutally suppressing all those fictitious appearances of free forms

Firenze, 1842. See vol. i. p. 29. Nardi, who wrote his history in exile, is in all respects one of the most trustworthy of the contemporary Florentine historians. See some account of Nardi, in a volume by the present writer on the Girlhood of Catherine de' Medici. Appendix No. 1, p. 284; Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. i. p. 138.

* Dolcezza di sangue.

† Clarice degli Orsini.

‡ Opere inedite, vol. ii. p. 46.

§ The "pallone," a game still played in Italy.

A.D. 1492. of government which Lorenzo had carefully respected and preserved for the gratification and prudent blinding of the people, Piero occupied himself little with affairs of state, giving himself up entirely to rude sports and reckless debauchery, while the business of the government was committed almost entirely to the hands of his Chancellor, Ser Piero da Bibbiena, his father's secretary, "a prudent man naturally, and much experienced in affairs of state; but not very acceptable to the citizens in his mode of transacting business, since it seemed to them that he arrogated to himself far too much power and authority."*

But it was perhaps of yet greater moment to Florence that Pietro de' Medici did not, together with the inheritance of the government of Florence, succeed to any portion of that credit and authority with the other princes of Italy which his father had enjoyed to such an eminent degree. It is useless to yield to the temptation, which history often sets before us, of attempting to speculate on what might have been, had the course of human events been in some slight particular different from what it was. Of course, if one small cypher in the huge sum had been changed or omitted, the whole of the calculations and results would have been different. But it is impossible to avoid being struck by the enormous importance of the consequences which arose from those jealousies and disagreements between the various Italian powers which broke out immediately after Lorenzo's death, which he was so eminently calculated to prevent, and which he had so often succeeded in disarming and conciliating.

The first important event which occurred to change the general position of the political situation in Italy was the death of Pope Innocent VIII., the marriage of whose son, Franceschetto Cybo with Maddalena, the daughter of

* Nardi, vol. i. p. 30.

Lorenzo de' Medici, had secured a strict alliance between the Pontiff and the Medici. Innocent died on the 26th of July, 1492, little more than three months after the death of Lorenzo. His health had been failing rapidly for some time past, and he had latterly fallen into such a state of stupor that it had more than once been believed that he was already dead. While he was in this state a Jewish physician came forward, who proposed to restore the vital forces of the Holy Father by means of the newly imagined scheme of transfusing into his veins the blood of a young and healthy subject in the prime of life. Thrice was the experiment tried, and thrice the victim of the preposterous notion perished, of course without obtaining the smallest advantage for the dying Pontiff. The lads, says Infessura,* who tells us that they were boys of ten years old, who were bought for a ducat a-piece for the purpose, died. The Pope was not healed, and the Jew ran away. A.D. 1492.

Some little time before the close of Lorenzo's life, Savonarola had predicted the deaths of him, of Pope Innocent, and of Ferdinand the king of Naples, as soon about to happen. Two-thirds of the prophecy had now come true, and before two more years had passed the remaining third was fulfilled by the death of the king, on the 23rd of January, 1494. This prediction was uttered in the sacristy of St. Mark's Church, in the presence of three well-known and reputable citizens, Alessandro Acciaiuoli, Cosimo Rucellai, and Carlo Carnesecchi; it is recorded by a great number of contemporary writers, and Savonarola frequently referred to it subsequently himself.† But there does not appear to have been anything in such a prediction sufficiently improbable to make all the paraded evidence of its really having been uttered at all necessary; or anything sufficiently remarkable to justify the friar in

* Diarium, apud Murat. Script. Rer. Ital. tom. iii. part 2, p. 1241.

† Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. i. p. 139.

A.D. 1492. basing upon it any claim even to a special degree of ordinary foresight. It is very easy to believe that such a prediction was made by Savonarola. It was exceedingly probable that it should occur to anybody casting his eyes over the political horizon of Italy that all these three events were likely to be not far off. Lorenzo's health had long been in a very precarious state, and his mode of life was not calculated to prolong his days. Pope Innocent was evidently near his end for a long time before his death actually occurred. And King Ferdinand was an infirm old man of seventy years. The small probability that any of these princes could last much longer must necessarily have suggested itself to any speculator on the probable course of Italian politics. And we are not told that the prophecy was accompanied by any of those precise indications of date, which alone would have made it remarkable.

But none the less this prediction of the Dominican friar had an important effect in contributing to place him in that position, which enabled and compelled him to take so important a part in the political history of Florence during the eventful period that was now about to open. For to the excitable minds of the populace the prophecy was a marvellous testimony to the heaven-sent seership and mission of the Friar. And the circumstance of his having been sent for by Lorenzo in his last moments, together with the fact of his having refused absolution to the dying Medici, served greatly to increase his authority and reputation in the city, while at the same time it rendered more clearly marked and recognized his office as the preacher and mouthpiece of the party opposed to that family.

And the conduct of Pietro was causing this party to increase in numbers daily. He had succeeded to the authority of his father barely a year, when he drew upon himself the odium of nearly the whole city by the sudden arrest of two young men, distant cousins of his own,

Lorenzo and Giovanni, the sons of a Pierfrancesco de' Medici. He was with difficulty persuaded by some of the more judicious friends of the family to abstain from putting these young men, who were especially popular in Florence, to death. They were imprisoned, and eventually escaped, and took refuge with the French king. But none the less was the effect produced on the public mind in the city very seriously injurious to Pietro. The motive of his hatred against his two cousins is very differently stated by different writers,* some attributing it to a personal quarrel and violence, which had occurred between the young men, and others to suspicions on the part of Pietro that his kinsmen were plotting with the French court. The only result of importance, however, of which there is no doubt, is the amount of unpopularity incurred by Pietro from this incident. A.D. 1493.

And already there were symptoms of coming storm in the Italian sky, which made it evident, that Lorenzo had died too soon, and that a pilot of a very different kind and calibre from Pietro would be needed at the helm of the state, if it was to be safely steered amid the coming tempests.

All these troubles,—the infinite, incalculable sufferings and wrong, which for some generations made Italy, the garden and paradise of the world, a hell upon earth, and the consequences of which paralysed her for so many more generations, and rendered her a dead weight and impediment to all human progress, instead of being a foremost worker and pioneer in the path of improvement and advancing civilization,—all these troubles, I say, which were now about to burst like a flood upon Italy, were caused, not so much by the special wickedness and perversity of this, that, or the other individual, as it has been

* Nardi, vol. i. p. 32; Giovio, Vita, lib. i.; Ammirato, lib. xxvi.; Guicciardini, lib. i.

A.D. 1493. usually the custom of historians to represent, as by the inevitable operation of certain principles, which were universally recognized as indisputable by mankind at that time. Only quite recently has the European world begun to comprehend the expediency of relinquishing those principles. And assuredly the only safeguard which the world can find against being again and again plunged into a similar sea of miseries and troubles must be found in such improved comprehension, and not in the improved virtue of the rulers of nations.

Deep down in the very roots of the feudal system,—deeper still probably in the brain-constitution of those northern races who originated that mode of social organization,—prevails a conjunction and confusion of the ideas of land-ownership and rulership. He who possessed the land was the natural and God-appointed ruler of those who dwelt on that land. From thence to the theory, which considered a nation as an estate, and subjected it to all the rules and vicissitudes under which the transmission of real property from one generation to another took place, the route was plain and unmistakeable. It is all very well for Sismondi to tell us at the beginning of the nineteenth century that "the government of nations is not transmitted by testament;" and it is amusing and instructive, as showing the gradual and slow process of growth of a new theory even at that date, and in such a mind as his, to find him adding to the above words—"to the injury of the rights of the legitimate successors."* In truth, the principle so enunciated is of little worth; and even if it had been most fully admitted in the fifteenth century, it would have done little towards saving the world from the misfortunes which fell upon it. Any competent feudal lawyer could have told the historian that difficulties enough to baffle an

* Sismondi, Histoire des Français, vol. xv. p. 139.

acute investigator may envelope this matter of legitimate succession; and the progress of thought upon the subject would, at a little later date, have stopped the writer's pen at the word "testament," or rather have substituted for the latter clause of the sentence the words, "or by any other mode of succession, save in so much as it shall seem good to the nation governed to approve of such transmission." But at the time in question, of which Sismondi also was writing, it was universally supposed that the kingdom which a sovereign governed, was his property. which it was competent to him to bequeath, under the same conditions and limitations which regulated the transmission of other inferior fiefs. A.D. 1493.

Now it was from this fertile source of a disputed succession to a throne that the fatal complications, which were now about to ruin Italy, arose. It was nearly an hundred and fifty years since the will of a worthless Queen of Naples had, by bequeathing certain rights, or appearance of rights, to the house of Anjou, sown the seeds of these evils. It has already been seen in the course of this history that these French claims were as an ever-open sore, continually ready at any moment to produce mischief, and to be made the source and pretext for war, by any potentate who conceived it to be his interest to do so. And now at last this menacing stone was set rolling by a prince who had hitherto so far deserved well of Italy, whatever otherwise his demerits may have been, in that he had striven to keep her different rulers united against the ultramontane invaders.

Ludovico il Moro, the uncle of the nominally reigning Duke of Milan, was an able though an unscrupulous man, and an astute politician. Giovanni Galeazzo, his nephew, the "legitimate" Duke, was worthless and incapable in every point of view. "Strength will be lord of imbecility," and Ludovic the Swarthy chose,—perhaps hardly to a

A.D. 1493. greater degree than was necessary to the best interests of the Duchy,—to keep his incompetent nephew in a state of tutelage, and to hold all real power in his own hands. Nor is there any reason for thinking that this arrangement might not have been perfectly satisfactory to all but the fatuous prince who occupied the throne of the Sforzas. But Giovanni Galeazzo had a wife, Isabella of Arragon, the daughter of Alphonso Duke of Calabria, and grand-daughter of Ferdinand the old King of Naples. Now if Giovanni Galeazzo was for himself content with living in a state of tutelage, Isabella was not content to be the wife of a prince who so lived. She was, says Philippe de Comines,* "very courageous, and would fain have given credit to her husband, if it had been possible for her to do so. But he was far from wise, and revealed all she said to him." Incapable as he was, Isabella could not be contented to live the wife of a mere puppet monarch; and was constantly urging her father and brother to demand of Ludovico that he should give up the real government into the hands of his nephew.

Now Ludovico il Moro had hitherto striven to keep, and by the help of Lorenzo de' Medici had hitherto succeeded in keeping the Italian princes so far united among themselves as to offer no tempting opportunity to strangers on the northern side of the Alps to make their differences a means for the prosecution of those claims on the kingdom of Naples, which would assuredly involve all Italy in the evils and dangers of a foreign invasion. But when Lorenzo was gone, and a successor possessing none of that moral ascendancy over the minds of the Italian sovereigns which "Il Magnifico" had wielded, and incapable of understanding the policy which had governed Lorenzo's alliances, had stepped into his place,—when Pope Innocent, whose power and authority had been at the disposal of Lorenzo, had also left

* Mémoires, lib. vii. ch. 2.

the scene, and been replaced by a Pope, who was well known to be ready to sell himself to any cause that might bid highest for his support,—under these new circumstances the Swarthy Ludovic felt himself to be in a very precarious position, when the Neapolitan father-in-law of his nephew insisted, in more peremptory tones than he had ever hitherto used, that the lawful Duke of Milan should be restored to his full rights. In the first place Ludovico had the sense of weakness which a consciousness of wrong done is sure to beget. His rule, though not specially worse than that of his neighbours, had not been such as to secure for him the undivided support or hearty allegiance of the Duchy. Then the Venetians had not forgotten, and he knew well that they had not forgotten, their old claims to a large portion of the dominions of the house of Sforza, and their old hopes of extending the sovereignty of the Queen of the Adriatic over proud Milan itself. He was under no delusion as to the fact, that the ever-greedy and encroaching Senate sitting among the hundred isles, always a dangerous neighbour, would become an open enemy, if an opportunity of showing herself such with a fair prospect of success should offer itself. A.D. 1493.

Under these circumstances the smallest manifestation of the disposition of the new ruler of Florence towards him, and of the course of conduct which he might expect from him in case a breach of the general peace in Italy should occur, became very important. And it is this consideration alone, which can persuade a reader to accept the minute account given by Guicciardini* of the first causes of the outbreak of hostilities, as at all capable of producing such vast and momentous results. The conduct of Ludovico, if unexplained by the uneasiness and suspicious sense of insecurity, which made it appear necessary to him to be beforehand

* In the recently published history of Florence.

A.D. 1493. with his enemies in providing for his own safety at all hazards, would appear altogether puerile and incredible in a prince, who had so ably striven to ward off from Italy the very calamities, which he was now the means of bringing down upon her.

As usual on the accession of a new Pope, special ambassadors were appointed by all the Italian powers to wait on Alexander VI. at Rome, to congratulate him on his promotion, and assure him of the obedience of their respective states. The foremost citizens in rank and wealth, accompanied by some colleague, whose special qualifications consisted in his learning and eloquence, and who was to harangue the Pope in the name of the entire embassy, were always chosen in each city. The occasion was one, as it will be easily imagined, of much rivalry and competitive ostentation, and not unfrequently also of more serious intrigues and negotiations.

Florence nominated six citizens, including Piero de' Medici, and Gentile Bishop of Arezzo, who was to be spokesman. As they were on the point of starting for Rome there came a proposition from Milan, suggesting that inasmuch as Milan, Florence and Naples were bound to each other in a common alliance, it would be well for the three embassies to unite together in the neighbourhood of Rome, and then make their entry and their appearance before the Pope together, and as one sole body. Possibly the motive of this proposal was to try the temper and intentions of Piero; perhaps to obviate some suspected underhand intrigue; or very likely (and perfectly in accordance with Italian mediæval ways and habits of looking at things) simply to prevent the Medicean magnificence from having an opportunity of outshining the Milanese embassy.

However this may have been, the proposal was at first assented to both at Florence and at Naples. But Messer

Gentile, who would by this arrangement have lost the opportunity of making his speech before the Pope, inasmuch as it would have been the privilege of the Neapolitan orator, as representing a king, to speak in the name of the united embassies, was in despair at the proposed scheme; and persuaded Pietro that it would be better that each embassy should enter the Pope's presence separately. A message was accordingly sent to Naples to say that Florence would prefer the latter arrangement, and requesting the king's government to dispose Messer Ludovico to agree to it. Naples did as she was asked, stating that her motive in the matter was simply to gratify Florence. Ludovico il Moro assented, but with a very bad grace; and at once drew the conclusion, says Guicciardini, that he and Pietro should not get on very well together. A.D. 1493.

The embassies did go separately; and the result was that the immensely ostentatious magnificence of Piero de' Medici so entirely outshone and eclipsed the Milanese ambassadors, that Ludovico was exceedingly vexed at it.

"And these matters," says Guicciardini,* "thus insignificant in themselves, though they cannot be said to have been the motive of Ludovico's quarrelling with Pietro, yet prepared the way for that result in such sort, that the greater matters, when they arose, more readily brought about the disagreements from which the common ruin of Italy at last resulted."

Immediately after this affair of the embassies another matter occurred, small in itself, but tending yet more markedly to show Ludovico how things were going in Italy, and admonishing him of the necessity of providing otherwise for his own safety, than by trusting for it to the general peace and mutual forbearance among the Italian princes, as he had been able to do, while Lorenzo at Florence was co-operating with him to this end.

* Opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 38.

A.D. 1493. Franceschetto Cybo, the son of the late Pope Innocent VIII., and the brother-in-law of Pietro de' Medici, was in possession of certain fiefs rightfully belonging to the Church, in the Roman territory. But on the election of the new Pope, fearing that he should be compelled to relinquish these lands, he sold them to Virginio Orsini, a connection of Pietro by his wife and his mother, who were both princesses of that great and powerful family. The transaction indeed between these two connections of the house of Medici had been arranged by Pietro himself. On the other hand Virginio Orsini was a general in the service of the King of Naples, who had also taken an interest and a part in bringing about the bargain in question, not only from friendly feeling towards Orsini, but induced by the consideration that, inasmuch as Ludovico il Moro had contributed powerfully to the election of the simoniacal Pope Alexander, it would be as well to have a means and pretext for annoying and quarrelling with the Pontiff ready to his hand, in case the need for such a weapon should arise. As Guicciardini * expresses it, "he wished that these lands should be a bone in the Pope's throat, by means of which Orsini might choke him," at his (the Neapolitan king's) instigation. Ludovico did not like the look of all this in any point of view. He thought that this manifestation of hostile feeling towards the Pope, whom he looked upon in a great degree as his particular friend and *protégé*, was especially directed against himself, aware as he was, too, of the king's discontent with him on the score of his usurpation of the power which belonged of right to his nephew, the husband of the king's grand-daughter. And still more disquieting to him was the manifest drawing together of Pietro de' Medici and the king, as shown by their co-operation in this matter of the lands bought by Orsini from

* Storia Fiorentina, *ibid.*

Franceschetto Cybo. Still hesitating, however, to play the last great and desperately dangerous card in his hand, if he could consistently with his own safety avoid doing so, he several times demanded of the ambassadors sent to his court from Naples and from Florence, that Virginio Orsini should restore to the Pope the fiefs, which avowedly belonged by right to the Church, warning both Pietro and the king that, unless this were done he should not remain quiet. But, as may be supposed, his representations remained wholly without effect. A.D. 1493.

Still a feeling of misgiving, and perhaps of real Italian patriotism, induced him to try yet another line of conduct before resorting to that last desperate expedient. Finding that the King of Naples and Pietro de' Medici were manifestly animated by feelings of hostility towards him as well as towards the Pope, he concluded, towards the end of the year 1493, a league with Venice and with the Pope, by the stipulations of which, besides the provisions for the common defence of their several territories, it was provided that both Venice and Milan should furnish the Pope with a certain number of troops for the forcible recovery of the lands held by Virginio Orsini. But Venice showed no alacrity in performing her part of this arrangement. Matters dragged on without anything being done. Ludovico found himself, more than ever in consequence of this last step, placed in avowed and open enmity to Naples and Florence. And strongly feeling the extreme danger of his position in such circumstances he at last took the fatal step of inviting the French pretender to the crown of Naples to cross the Alps for the purpose of making good his claim by force of arms.

"Such," says Guicciardini, "were the beginnings and the origin of the ruin of Italy, and particularly of Pietro de' Medici."

The claims of the house of Anjou, derived originally from

A.D. 1494. the will of Queen Giovanna I., in the middle of the fourteenth century, and secondly from that of Giovanna II. about eighty years afterwards, had often been a source of trouble, and were continually a menace and danger to Italy. But at the present time they had passed into hands, which made the appeal of Ludovico a source of far greater peril to Italy than had ever before arisen from the Angevine pretensions. These had latterly devolved in due course of inheritance on René, King of Provence, a monarch in whose hands they were not likely to become very disquieting to the Neapolitan sovereigns of the house of Arragon. But that long-sighted and crafty monarch, Louis XI., perceiving with the instinct of a pettifogging attorney, that the day might come when something might be made of these claims, had persuaded René, instead of allowing them to descend to his nephew René II., Duke of Lorraine, according to the proper course of feudal descent, to bequeath them to his brother Charles, who himself dying childless in 1481, made Louis XI. his universal heir.* That monarch had also prepared matters in Italy with his usual vulpine sagacity for facilitating the descent of the French arms into the peninsula for the prosecution of the claims thus acquired. But circumstances had prevented him from profiting by the combinations thus skilfully prepared. And it thus came to pass, that when Ludovico il Moro made up his mind to invite the French into Italy, the claimant to whom he addressed himself was Charles VIII. of France, Louis XI.'s son.

The youthful sovereign, then only twenty-three years old, received and assented to Ludovico's proposals with an alacrity and zeal far greater than any which the Italian prince had calculated on. Ludovico had intended and expected that at the utmost the French king would have

* Sismondi, Histoire des Français, vol. xv. p. 138.

consented to send a few troops into Italy, sufficient to be a thorn in the side of the King of Naples, and to suffice as a hint that it would be wise for him to keep on good terms with his brother potentate of Milan. But Charles, whose recent treaties of peace with England, Austria, and Spain left him at full liberty to enter on the new enterprise proposed to him,* seized with avidity on the idea of an expedition to Italy. Charles was devoid alike of the valuable qualities of head, and of the worst qualities of heart, that had so specially characterized his predecessor. He was utterly incapable as a sovereign;—simply a very foolish, weak, and uneducated young man, without much harm in him, but wholly given up to debauchery and dissipation, as such a young man, placed in such a position, might naturally be expected to be. Pierre de Bourbon, Sire de Beaujeu, the husband of Anne the young king's elder sister, and that sagacious princess herself, who were pretty well the only serious counsellors in the court of Charles, were strongly opposed† to the projected enterprise. But to the imagination of the youthful monarch and of the hair-brained young nobles around him, the proposed expedition presented itself as a sort of chivalrous pleasure-jaunt on a large scale, in a country understood to abound in every material for enjoyment, a land teeming with beauty, abundance, and wealth; where the women were lovely, the wines generous, and the men excelling in the production of all those luxuries which the imagination of courtly chivalry most coveted, and at the same time by no means formidable guardians or protectors of their right to keep all those good things for themselves. "Nothing was talked of at the French court accordingly but the countless wealth of the Italian provinces,—of that famous Lombardy, whence

A.D. 1494.

* Histoire de France, par Henri Martin, vol. viii. p. 304.

† Henri Martin, Histoire de France, Charles VIII., vol. viii.

A.D. 1494. the Duke of Milan alone raised every year from six hundred and fifty to seven hundred thousand ducats of revenue;—of the noble estates which all the French courtiers were to obtain in Naples, when the victorious king should confiscate the lands of the Neapolitan nobles attached to the house of Arragon;—and of the ecclesiastical benefices which the Pope would shower on those recommended to him by a victorious monarch."*

Especially those magnificent sums, which the Italian princes were stated to have found the means of extracting from their dominions,—reports which for generations past had been abundantly confirmed by the rich stream of wealth which had been pouring across the Alps in payments for all sorts of purposes, and on all sorts of occasions, mainly for the hire of captains of war and their men,—excited the chivalric ardour of the French mind. Ready cash was the scarcest of all articles in the coffers and in the court of Charles of France; and the almost total absence of it threatened to render the delightful expedition in prospect impossible. At one time it seemed probable that this cause and the influence of the Lady Anne and her husband would avail to cause the scheme to be abandoned. But at length, mainly by the influence of Etienne di Vese, Senechal di Beaucaire, and Briconnet the financier, who became afterwards Cardinal of St. Malo,—men of whom de Comines says that they were people of low condition, who had no experience of state affairs,—a secret treaty between the King of France and the Duke of Milan was signed, by the terms of which Ludovico il Moro undertook to deliver a free passage into Italy to the French armies both by Lombardy and Genoa, to advance two hundred thousand ducats, and to place at their disposition five hundred men-at-arms, and the whole of the

* Sismondi, Histoire des Français, vol. xv. p. 144.

Genoese fleet; while Charles on his part promised to leave two hundred French lances in Asti, for the assistance of Ludovico, and to confer on him the Duchy of Tarento, . . . as soon as he should have gotten possession of it. A.D. 1491.

Matters having been thus arranged, Charles started from the Château of Montils, near Tours, and rode on his way towards Italy as far as Lyons. But there the pleasures and seductions of the South detained him, amid tourneys and festivals, and balls, till he had spent all the little ready money he had been able to scrape together for the expedition. "He was provided neither with sense nor with money," says Philippe de Comines, "nor with anything else necessary for such an enterprise; he was but twenty-two years old, a fledgling just out of the nest; and those who had the guidance of him were men of low estate, who had no experience in anything."*

Charles however, in some degree recalled to reason by the remonstrances of his sister Anne, at last tore himself away from the seductions of Lyons, and got one stage further on his way towards Italy, to Vienne. Thence de Comines was despatched to prepare for the reception of his royal master; but was recalled by messengers sent after him, before he had got far, and was told that all was broken off, that Charles had squandered the money absolutely necessary for the journey, the treasure-chests were empty, and there were no means for the supply of the most pressing daily needs.

At length however a Milanese banker was found who consented to advance 50,000 ducats, for which Ludovico gave security; and Antonio Sauli, one of the richest bankers of Genoa, lent 100,000 golden crowns, induced by his zeal for the cause, . . . and by 14,000 francs

* De Comines, Mémoires, lib. vii.

A.D. 1494. interest for four months! And with this ruinously purchased cash in his coffers, Charles set forth from Vienne on the 22nd of August, 1494.

But in the meantime the Italian sovereigns began to be alarmed at the menacing prospect of the invasion, which their dissensions had brought upon them. Even Ludovico himself began to have misgivings, now when it was too late, as to the results of the step he had taken, results which it was already apparent, were likely to be very much larger and more serious than he had calculated on.

Especially the alarm and agitation caused by the rumours of the impending invasion were great in Florence. The people had become under the Medicean domination essentially unwarlike. All the virility of the nation had been paralyzed by the deadening touch of despotism. The coward imaginations of the holiday-making Florentines were frightened by terrors, that seem more like such as might have stricken with contagious panic the effeminate Romans of the later Empire at the tidings of the coming of Attila, rather than anything possible in the fifteenth century. The numbers of the expected invaders were said to be infinite. They were asserted to be of gigantic stature and horribly ferocious disposition. Their valour was declared to be invincible. The panic was such that the citizens already saw in imagination their streets running with torrents of blood.*

And this state of the public mind was exasperated to a frenzy of terrified excitement by the influence of that extraordinary man, the monk of St. Mark, whose strange figure occupies a foremost place in the Florentine history of the next few years. Of all the motley crowd of strongly characterized and curiously contrasted figures, which the history of that time shows us, trooping in brilliant but all

* Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. i. p. 174.

too confused phantasmagoric procession across the field of her magic glass, that of the Dominican friar, Girolamo Savonarola, looms the largest through the midst of the intervening centuries. And such may well be the case. For whether it be to the historian mainly anxious to estimate the nature of the mark which the friar left on his time, and the causative value of his contribution towards the shaping of events into the form which they assumed; or to the student of human character, whose imagination is forcibly impressed by the strongly marked lines and shadows, and the picturesqueness of the man, and the terrible interest attaching to his ultimate fate; or to the philosophic psychologist conscious that in this Dominican monk he has beneath his scalpel one of the most, perhaps *the* most, remarkable example on record of a great and not ignoble soul, balancing itself with awful difficulty on the perilously uncertain and swaying line which divides self-deception from conscious imposture, high prophetic fervour from low fanaticism, the noblest zeal of the philanthropist and patriot from the self-seeking acts of the ambitious politician, and genius from mental unsoundness; or lastly, to the theologian sorely puzzled to assign to this abnormal apostolic man, his proper place in the Pantheon of the Church, without contravening rules and principles, the contravention of which implies the total subversion of his science and himself; whether it be, I say, to any one of these inquirers, Girolamo Savonarola stands out from the background of his time, one of the most attractive and yet most difficult subjects of study and interest which the world has seen. A.D. 1494.

It is perhaps saying nothing more of this strange man, than may be said of all those who have seemed to contribute largely to the direction of the social life and mind of a nation into a particular course, to remark that the aspect of the times helped to make Savonarola, as much as he

A.D. 1494. contributed to the making of his time, such as it was. But the fact is specially forced upon our attention, when we contemplate the preacher as he stood in the pulpit of the Duomo before the people on each successive saint's day of the period during which the menace of the French invasion was terrifying all minds throughout the peninsula. He preached during these months a series of sermons on the biblical account of the construction of Noah's ark. And all Florence pressed with unspeakable earnestness to hear these discourses; thronged the enormous aisles of the vast church in thick-packed masses; hung breathless on the words of the preacher, or swayed and vibrated with the contagion of uncontrollable emotion, as he hurled among them his fiery denunciations of the wrath to come.

Sermons on the building of Noah's ark! Ay! but the ark was to be constructed of all those moral and civic virtues, the lack of which had brought Florence to her present pass. The preacher was Savonarola; and the flood was the coming deluge of foreign invasion which even then was on the point of breaking over the land. Plank by plank—to preserve the metaphorical language of the preacher—plank by plank, in sermon after sermon, he built up thus the ark in which such as should be saved were to find refuge. And Florence marvelled at the length of time which the orator consumed in this part of his subject. The course of the biblical story would carry him on to speak of the coming of the flood, and the destruction that ensued. His hearers were burning—the fanatics and the politicians, the terror-stricken and the sceptics alike—to hear from the seer the particulars of the coming judgment; but Savonarola lingered over the previous part of his subject. In all Lent he had not yet finished his exposition of that one short chapter of Genesis. He said himself that he wondered at his own tardiness,

and that it seemed to him as if "some superior power held him back."* A.D. 1494.

It was no doubt the same superior power which, during the same period, was also keeping back feather-headed King Charles from coming to a final decision as to invading or not invading Italy. But *on the 5th of September* Charles descended from the Alps and entered Turin. All doubt as to the "to be" or "not to be" was at an end. Still some days would be needed for this intelligence to reach the best and earliest informed persons at Florence; and it was not till the *21st of September*, that the prophet left the safe ground of general exhortation, for the more thrilling work of particular denunciation.

That 21st of September was, as Signor Villari says, a memorable one in Florence, both for Savonarola and his audience. The vast spaces of the Duomo were more closely filled even than usual. The anxiety to hear the preacher was such that the citizens thronged the building for hours before Savonarola was to ascend the pulpit. "At last the orator appeared. The silence and attention of the vast congregation were more marked than usual. Savonarola measured his auditory with a calm gaze; and then, when he had marked the unwonted trepidation which prevailed throughout the crowd, he suddenly, with a terrible voice, cried aloud, '*Behold! I will bring the waters over the earth!*' That voice was as a thunder-clap bursting in the church. The words appeared to put a strange terror into the hearts of every one in the building. Pico della Mirandola, who was present, said afterwards that a shudder ran through all his frame, and that his hair stood on end as he listened; and Savonarola has recorded that he was on that day no less moved than his audience. . . . The minds of all were so wholly under the dominion of terror, that they

* Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. i. p. 173.

A.D. 1494. already saw in imagination the city deluged with blood. In their terror the crowd thronged, as it were, to demand protection from Savonarola. All his prophetic words had hitherto come true. The princes whose death he had foretold had all three descended to the tomb. The avenging sword of the Lord was already at the gate. The scourges announced were at hand. He only who had foretold these woes, he who had seen them coming while yet afar off, he alone must be supposed to know the remedy for so great misfortunes. It was thus that the preacher's name was noised abroad throughout Italy; that all eyes were turned to him, and that, by the inevitable force of circumstances, he became a politician. All the people had recourse to him. The ablest men in the city sought his counsel; and thus the party which supported him became, as by a stroke of magic, masters of the city."*

It must be borne in mind that Savonarola, while availing himself to the utmost of the panic in the public mind, for the purpose of turning the popular feeling in the direction he wished it to follow, and while enlarging on the woes which the "flagellum Dei" was about to bring on Italy, by no means deprecated the invasion, which was to be the means of executing God's righteous judgments and purging Italy from her abominations. On the contrary, he welcomed and desired the coming of the French king. Was there not an ark of refuge provided for those who would profit by his invitation to enter it? That is to say, the French scourge of God was to fall with avenging and exterminating fury on the enemies and political adversaries of the Dominican reformer, on usurping tyrant princes, and their adherents; on a simoniacal and scandalous Pope and a thoroughly corrupt church. But in that "dies iræ," which was about to dawn on Italy, the Lord would know his own.

* Villari, *ibid.*

They were indeed easily recognizable even by human ken; and, as is usual in similar cases, took good care to make themselves so by sufficiently marked outward and visible signs of the spiritual grace which was in them. These signs were very much the same as those which have in most ages and climes been understood to characterize most fitly the professors of a special love and reverence for the Giver of all good things, the Lord of the bounteous feast to which man has been bidden on His beautifully prepared world; that is to say, an air of entire disapproval and disgust at all that has been provided for them—a sour dismal look, a whining voice, and a habit of perpetual lamentation. Hence the powerful party in the state, which was formed of the followers of Savonarola, and which exercised a master influence upon all the remaining history and fortunes of the Florentine Commonwealth, was known as the party of the "Piagnoni," or *Whimperers*. A.D. 1494.

It is hardly necessary to point out that these Piagnoni, who, whimperers as they were, comprised much of whatever worth was left in Florence, were the enemies to the death of the Medici and their friends. And it will be equally clear to the reader how very powerfully the panic which the approach of the French had created, contributed to put Savonarola in the position he occupied, and to make his Piagnoni the preponderating party in the state.

The alarm, though perhaps not equally excessive, was also very general throughout the peninsula. At Naples, the old King Ferdinand had died on the 25th of January, 1494: thus completing the fulfilment of Savonarola's threefold prediction. His son Alfonso, though high-spirited and warlike in disposition, and though irritated against Ludovico, was sufficiently sensible of the danger which was menacing Italy to see the desirableness of laying aside dissensions between the different sections of the

A.D. 1494. peninsula.* He wrote a very conciliatory letter to Ludovico, which produced a great effect on that politic prince, and "led him," as Guicciardini says, "to wish for the pacification of Italy, and for the possibility of diverting this fancy of the French,—*questo umore de' Franzesi.*" But the Pope, who also began to conceive alarm at the prospect of a French invasion, and feared "that the flood of foreigners might rise too high in Italy,"† animated by a similar feeling that under these circumstances it behoved the powers of Italy to draw together, made up his differences with Alfonso at Naples and Pietro at Florence; and by this very act precipitated the mischief he sought to avoid. For so sore and sleeplessly vigilant were the jealousy and mutual suspicion of all these sovereigns, that the mere fact of this reconciliation between the Pope and Naples and Florence, sufficed so to alarm Ludovico, as to scatter to the winds all his better thoughts and resolutions, and to convince him finally that his own security could be purchased only by the ruin of those princes. The die was therefore finally cast; and Ludovico set himself to co-operate with the French to the utmost of his power.

Starting at last from Vienne, Charles arrived on the 5th of September at Turin, remained there only a few hours, and on the third day afterwards reached Asti. There seductions of the same kind as those which surrounded him at Lyons once more exercised their influence over him, diverted his attention from the more serious objects of his

* Sismondi represents these circumstances very differently (Histoire des Français, vol. xv. p. 153). He imagines that the conciliatory views spoken of in the text were attributable to the old and prudent King Ferdinand only; and that the fiery Alfonso was all along eager for war with France and Milan. But Sismondi had never had an opportunity of seeing the recently printed Storia Fiorentina of Guicciardini, whom I consider by far the best authority on this point, and whose account of the matter I have followed. See Opere inedite di Guicciardini, vol. iii. p. 101.

† Guicciardini, *ibid.*

expedition, delayed his progress, and emptied his coffers. A.D. 1494. These dalliances were however cut short by an attack of the small-pox,* which placed his life in imminent peril for six or seven days. And when the danger was passed, another fortnight was lost before it was possible for the royal patient to think of resuming his journey. Sismondi says, that the illness of Charles was caused more unmistakeably by his debaucheries, and supposes it to have been a dreadful malady unknown in Europe till imported by the companions of Christopher Columbus, who landed in Spain on their return from America on the 15th of March, 1493; and unknown in Italy till brought thither by the French on the occasion in question. The latter fact is undoubted; and the terrible scourge alluded to is still known in Italy by a name perpetuating the memory of this French origin. But the very passage from a contemporary chronicler, which Sismondi quotes in support of his opinion respecting the King's illness, would seem to indicate that it was rather the small-pox, as stated by Henri Martin.

When at length the march of the court and army was resumed on the 6th of October, fresh expedients had to be found for once again replenishing in a small degree the royal exchequer. Ludovico had to advance further sums; and when the dowager Duchess, Blanche de Montferrat, then Regent of Savoy for her son, wearing all her most costly jewels, came to welcome the French King to Italy, and in doing so made use of that formula of politeness, still in general usage in Spain, which assures the guest that all the host possesses is at his service, Charles forthwith took the unlucky lady at her word,—told her that in that case he would trouble her for her jewels;—received them, and pawned them for 12,000 ducats. And soon afterwards he treated the Marquise Maria, the mother

* Henri Martin, Histoire de France, vol. viii. p. 314.

A.D. 1494. of Guillaume Jean, Marquis of Montferrat, in the same manner, and raised as much more at her expense.

These little matters however were but small contributions to the already rapidly-growing conviction in the minds of the Italians, that they had made a terrible and fatal mistake in inviting the Frenchmen across the Alps. But, on the other hand, the French were on their side as rapidly becoming disgusted with the enterprise they had undertaken, and specially with their ally, swarthy Ludovic of Milan. While the court was still at Asti, the French nobles began to urge the abandonment of the expedition. They complained that there was no money, that the climate was dreadfully hot, and all the wine sour. It would be much better to give it up, and get back to France.* Charles was inclined to yield to these reasonable representations on the part of the French chivalry. But he was shamed by the urgent remonstrances of Ludovico into swearing that nothing should induce him to turn northwards till he had at least entered Rome. What, Ludovico asked him, would be said throughout Europe of the King of France, who having undertaken so great and glorious an enterprise, was turned back by the first difficulties, and betrayed to destruction the allies who had trusted in him? For whatever might be the opinion in Italy, and even of Ludovico himself, of the step that had been taken, it was for him at least too late to think of retrieving it. Had the French then returned across the Alps, Ludovico would of course have been left to the mercy of the other Italian powers, whom he had so deeply offended. So it was determined that the French court and army were to march forward.

None the less did a strong mutual feeling of ill-will and distrust continue to grow up rapidly between the Milanese

* Phil. de Comines, lib. vii.

and their allies. In every way the prospect of affairs was disquieting enough for Ludovico. Already the French courtiers began to say, quite loudly enough for their hosts to overhear them, that this fair and rich duchy of Milan, which they were traversing, had been the heritage of Valentine Visconti, the grandmother of the Duke of Orleans, and had been unjustly taken from her by the Sforzas.* They rode from city to city, coveting everywhere a wealth of luxury and civilization in comparison with which their own homes seemed poor and barbarous; and on arriving at Pavia on the 14th of October, they demanded that the King and his suite should be lodged in the citadel. A.D. 1494.

The Italians had no means of resisting a demand so offensively dictated by undisguised mistrust. But there was already a tenant inhabiting the citadel of Pavia, whom Ludovico would fain have kept out of the way of the French King, if he could have done so. This was the unhappy Giovanni Galeazzo, his grand-nephew, whose sovereignty he was usurping. This unlucky prince and Charles VIII. were first cousins, the sons of two sisters of the house of Savoy. Of course it was impossible to prevent the two young cousins from meeting. And indeed the interview might have seemed to serve as pleading Ludovico's apology for keeping his unfortunate nephew † in a state of tutelage. For he was, as Sismondi tells us on the authority of Philippe de Comines, "almost devoid of common sense, worn out by debauchery, and suffering from slow disease, perhaps caused by poison." But while the two cousins were together in the presence of Ludovico, their mere matter-of-form conversation was interrupted by the sudden entrance of Isabella, the imbecile prince's energetic wife, who threw herself at the French monarch's feet, and im-

* Sismondi, Histoire des Français, vol. xv. p. 167.

† Grand-nephew, more accurately.

A.D. 1494. plored his favourable consideration for her father and her brother,—the King and heir-apparent of Naples, whose dispossession was the avowed object of the French invasion. Charles answered her, that "that could hardly be; and that she had better reason to supplicate for her husband and herself, who was still a young and beautiful woman,"*—a remark which could not have been very reassuring or agreeable to his ally Ludovico, who was looking on at this remarkable scene.

The French court proceeded to Piacenza; whither they were accompanied by Ludovico, and while they were resting there a short time, a message from Pavia reached them announcing the death of Giovanni Galeazzo. On receiving this news Ludovico at once left his guests, and hastened to Milan, where he had no difficulty in causing himself to be proclaimed Duke to the exclusion of an infant son, left by his nephew. It was a matter of course that Ludovico should be suspected of having put an end to the wretched young man's life. And it may well be that what had passed at Pavia, had alarmed him sufficiently to induce him to commit a crime which we have every right to say he would not have scrupled to commit, if he judged that state policy rendered it expedient. On the other hand, there was cause enough in the course of nature to account for the premature death of Giovanni Galeazzo. In any case the hatred and mistrust of their ally Ludovico on the part of the French broke out with fresh violence, on this news, and, as Sismondi says, quoting the chroniclers of the time, "though they continued their march across his states as allies, and though all his fortresses were thrown open to them as to friends, the greater number of them carried with them in their hearts the determination to punish him on their return."

* De Comines, lib. vii.; Sismondi, vol. xv. p. 167.

Charles left Piacenza on the 23rd of October, and that evening reached the little Apennine town of Firenzuola. His halting places after that were Borgo San Donnino, Fornove, San Terenzio, Bercelli, and lastly Pontremoli, a little town on the western slope of the Apennine, and the last place within the territory of Milan. And thus was accomplished "an event" which, as Gibbon says, changed the face of Europe. A.D. 1494.

CHAPTER VI.

Steps taken by Alfonso of Naples for the defence of his kingdom—He sends a fleet to Genoa—The French, warned by the Cardinal della Rovere, are there before him—Duke of Orleans at Genoa—Rappallo—Battle there between the Neapolitans and the French—Rout of the Italians—Horrible atrocities perpetrated by the French—Dishonest representation of a French historian—Effect of this battle throughout Italy—General alarm in Italy—Omens and portents of coming trouble—Guicciardini on this subject—French ambassadors at various Italian courts—Reception of them—by the Pope—by the Venetians—by Florence—Feeling of Florence on the subject different from that of the Medici—Precarious position of Pietro de' Medici—Answer of Florence to the French ambassadors—Charles banishes from France the servants of the Medici, but not other Florentines—Advance of the French army through the Lunigiana—Cruelties perpetrated by them at Fivizzano—The Magra—Easily defensible line afforded by that river—The French besiege Sarzana—Great alarm at Florence—Increasing unpopularity of Pietro de' Medici—His panic terror—He forms a sudden resolution to go to the French king at Sarzana—His arrival at the French camp—Dastardly conduct there—French army march on to Pisa—Pietro returns to Florence—Indignation in the city—Reception there of Pietro—The tocsin bell rung—Attempt of Pietro to put down the discontent of the city by force—Pietro refused admittance to the *Palazzo pubblico*.—He leaves the city and flies to Bologna—Vain attempt of his brother Giovanni, the Cardinal, to stem the tide—He is obliged to follow his brother—escapes in the disguise of a friar—Giuliano, the third brother, also leaves the city.

In the meanwhile, Alfonso, the new King of Naples, had not been remiss in doing what he could for the defence of his kingdom. He sent an army into Romagna under the command of his son Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria, to oppose the progress of the invaders, in case they should select that route towards southern Italy. And he had secured the alliance and co-operation of all the small

independent princes of the Romagnole cities, including Bologna, towards obtaining the same object. At the same time he concerted a plan of operations with the Genoese "fuorusciti," with a view to revolutionizing that importantly situated city, and thus closing against the enemy another means of access to the south. These "fuorusciti" had been as usual the victims of the last revolution in Genoa, when, after a brief struggle for liberty, the city had again passed under the absolute dominion of the house of Sforza. But it seems almost superfluous to specify this in speaking of the mediæval history of any one of the Italian cities. Of course there were always "fuorusciti" belonging to each of them at any given point of its existence during those ages. And the mention of them is constantly met with in the historians of those times in terms which seem to imply that a band of these exiles—always ready to lend their hand to any scheme which might appear to promise a probability of upsetting the existing government of their native city, and thus opening a path for their own return—was a natural and necessary portion of the municipal organization of society. The system of wholesale proscription thus rendered every revolution the unfailing parent of other revolutions to follow, and made the constant existence of these "fuorusciti" one of the most important of the causes that contributed to keep up that perpetual condition of turbulence and changefulness which so markedly characterised Italian mediæval history. A.D. 1494.

Alfonso's first care, therefore, was to arrange a plan of operations with the Genoese "fuorusciti;" and, having accomplished this without any difficulty, as usual, he sent as powerful a fleet as he could get together into the waters of Genoa. The plan was well imagined, and the King of Naples might in all probability have succeeded in getting possession of Genoa,—for the proscribed party who were opposed to the sovereignty of Milan was large and in-

A.D. 1494. fluential,—if only the execution of the project had followed at once on the conception of it. But Alfonso, who had at the last moment endeavoured, as has been seen, to conciliate Ludovico, had been kept in suspense and doubt by that crafty prince till the right moment for a successful attempt at seizing Genoa had passed away. When the Neapolitan fleet reached the Bay of Genoa, Frederic, the brother of king Alfonso, to whom the command of it had been entrusted, found that the French had been beforehand with him. Giuliano della Rovere, Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli, who afterwards as Pope Julius II. strove so vehemently to liberate Italy from the presence of the stranger, and thus to undo the consequences of what he was now doing, had revealed to the French Alfonso's plan of operations against Genoa. This Cardinal della Rovere, who had opposed to the utmost of his power the election of the infamous Borgia to the throne of St. Peter, and who was that Pope's implacable enemy, had fled from Rome and the unscrupulous vengeance of the successful Alexander, and had united himself to the band of Neapolitan exiles, who, victims of the recent rising of the barons against king Ferdinand, had been eagerly striving at Lyons to incite Charles to accept the invitation of Ludovico and march to the conquest of the kingdom of Naples.* His ardent and energetic temperament had seen in the prospects opened by the proposed French invasion nothing less than a possibility of driving the Aragonese dynasty from Italy, and at the same time hurling from his seat the simoniacal Borgia. He had found the means of obtaining timely information—(what secret can in a Catholic country be hidden from a priest bent on discovering it?)—of the movements against Genoa projected by Alfonso, and had induced the French king to dispatch

* Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, lib. i.

thither the Duke of Orleans with a powerful fleet, on board of which were placed 3000 Swiss mercenaries.* When Frederic arrived, therefore, with his ships before Genoa, he found that it was impossible to attempt anything against that city. Anxious, however, to do something towards the end in view with the force at his disposal, he attempted but failed in an attack on Porto Venere; and then, after having refitted at Leghorn, returned northwards and disembarked 3000 men, under the command of some of the Genoese exiles, at Rappallo, a little town in the Genoese territory, about half-way between Genoa and Sestri. It is situated at the bottom of a deep and magnificent bay at the very foot of the Apennine, which in that part of the coast leaves barely space enough for the little fishing villages to niche themselves into the coves and hollows of the hills. The scenery around, with the deep blue Mediterranean on the one hand, and the rich olive and ilex covered hills on the other, is some of the most lovely of the eminently lovely district traversed by the celebrated "*cornice*" coast road. This road, however, dates only from the time of the first French empire. In the days when Don Frederic of Naples landed his 3000 troops there for the prosecution of that Italian Sisyphus-labour of barring the path into Italy against French invaders, Rappallo and its fellow-townlets along the coast were accessible only by sea, or by difficult mountain bridle-paths over the precipitous headlands which separate them from each other and shut them out from the rest of the world. A.D. 1494.

Nevertheless it was impossible for the Duke of Orleans to proceed southwards, leaving this body of Neapolitan troops established on the coast, in his rear; for to have done so would have been equivalent to the loss of Genoa.

* Henri Martin, Histoire de France, vol. viii. p. 308.

A.D. 1494. He therefore threw his three thousand Swiss troops on shore at Rappallo, for the purpose of dislodging the Neapolitans, who had hastily entrenched themselves, while Antonio Maria San Severino, who commanded for Ludovico at Genoa, marched a body of Italian men-at-arms along the coast to the same point for the purpose of co-operating with the Swiss. The Neapolitans were thus much out-numbered; but the combat was nevertheless an obstinate one. The southerners were, however, beaten from their ground, and forced to fly across the neighbouring mountains. And thus was spilt the first blood in those disastrous wars from which the beginning of Italy's ruin and degradation may be dated.

The result of this battle caused a strong and painful feeling throughout Italy. It was a sombre presage of the events which were to follow, and seems to have roused Italy to a sense of the real nature and seriousness of the danger which was menacing scarcely more any one portion of her soil than another. Especial horror and indignation was produced in the minds of the Italians by the ferocious and, as they deemed, barbarous mode of warfare practised by the French and Swiss troops. "The wars of France had for a long time past," says Sismondi,* "been more bloody than those of Italy, because they were decided more by mere animal force, than by the talent of the commanders. But the French and the Swiss transported into Italy, behaved in a far more blood-thirsty manner than when at home. They seemed to become more ferocious in proportion as they had less cause of enmity against those with whom they were fighting. A blind hatred took the place of the measured rivalry which had animated them in previous combats. The Swiss mercenaries, who had no interest in the war, considering the carnage as a pleasure

* Histoire des Français, vol. xv. p. 161.

and a species of intoxication, killed in the first instance all the prisoners who had surrendered to them, then seizing those who had been captured by the Italian troops of San Severino, they put them likewise to death. They pillaged Rappallo without mercy or distinction of party; and they pushed their brutal ferocity to the excess of murdering fifty patients, who had been for some time previously in a hospital there. The indignation in Genoa against these cut-throats was extreme. Some twenty of the French and Swiss were killed in a popular rising on their return thither from Rappallo; and it was with difficulty that the entire city was prevented from rising against the strangers." A more recent French * historian passes over these disgraceful facts much more lightly, and, quoting Guicciardini, insinuates, that the Italian outcry on the French ferocity and blood-thirstiness was occasioned by the slaughter of only a hundred men, and was due to the absurd harmlessness of the wars to which the Italians were accustomed. But this is not honest. It is true that Guicciardini † says that "more than an hundred men of the Neapolitans were killed, partly in the fight and partly in the retreat; a slaughter undoubtedly great according to the manner of fighting which at that time prevailed in Italy." But the indignation and outcry of the Italians was occasioned by the murder in cold blood of the prisoners and of the patients in hospital, which Guicciardini does not mention, but which Sismondi, an honest and not a French historian, relates on the authority of contemporary writers, whose records M. Martin had also under his eyes, as is shown by his citations from them in other places. A.D. 1494.

But even before the issue of this ill-omened battle at Rappallo had alarmed all Italy, a growing sentiment of uneasiness and misgiving was becoming general throughout

* Henri Martin, vol. viii. p. 313.

† Storia d'Italia, vol. i. p. 159. Edit. Capolaga.

A D. 1494. the peninsula. "Not only," says Guicciardini, in a remarkable passage,* well worth citing as an illustration of the state of feeling and modes of thinking of the period;—"Not only did the preparations for invasion by sea and by land, but the agreement of the warnings of heaven with these acts of man foretell to Italy the calamities that were about to fall on her. For those who profess to have either by means of science, or by a divine inspiration, the knowledge of the future, agreed in affirming unanimously that more and greater changes were at hand than had been seen for many ages in any part of the world. And the terror of men's minds was increased by the resonance throughout the country of reports of strange phenomena, not according to the wonted course of nature or of the ordinances of Providence. In Apulia three suns were seen in the heavens during the night, surrounded by clouds, and accompanied by terrible storms of lightning and thunder. In the territory of Arezzo for a space of many days there were plainly seen to pass through the air an infinite number of armed men on horses of enormous size, and with a tremendous clangour of trumpet-blasts and drums. In many parts of Italy the sacred images and statues sweated manifestly. Many monstrous births occurred, both human and among the inferior orders of the creation. And many other things out of the course of nature happened in many places. And these things caused an unspeakable terror to fill the minds of the populations, already predisposed to alarm by the reports of the French power and ferocity."

It is curious, and far from uninstructive, to find the acute, sagacious, philosophic, and sceptical Guicciardini writing thus, without any word or phrase to indicate that his own mind was in any degree superior to the belief which he describes as having exercised so universal an

* Storia d' Italia, vol. i. p. 150. Edit. Capolago.

influence on his contemporaries. At all events at the time when Guicciardini wrote, the portents, whatever may have been their authenticity, had shown themselves to be no false or mistaken presages of evil! The misfortunes which were coming upon Italy were terrible enough to have justified any amount of monstrosities and abnormal celestial phenomena, if indeed it is in the order of things that the approach of human misery has the power to fright nature from the placid following of her wonted way. A.D. 1494.

Meantime flocks of ambassadors, like storm petrels flapping their wings in uneasy flight on the eve of a tempest, were hurrying to and fro not less ominously, or less discordantly noisy. The French court sent ambassadors,—Philippe de Comines was one of them,—to the various courts of Italy to sound their intentions. Pope Alexander protested against the attempt of the King of France to assert his claim to the throne of Naples by force of arms. Naples had always been, the Holy Father declared, a fief of the Apostolic See; and whether the French claims were founded in justice or not, it appertained to the Pontiff alone to pronounce sentence between the claimants. The predecessors of the present Pope had granted the investiture of the kingdom of Naples to the House of Aragon; and nothing but an Apostolic sentence could reverse this decree.

The Venetians were at this time much isolated in the political system of Italy. For some time previously to the crossing of the Alps by the French, the Venetian government had taken a line of its own, and held itself aloof from the alliances by which the other states had striven to maintain the balance of power in Italy. Of the five chief states among which the principal part of the peninsula was divided, viz., the Papal States, Naples, Florence, Milan, and Venice, the latter was at this time more powerful than any one of the others, though very much less so than all of the others put together. The Queen of the Adriatic was an

A.D. 1494. object of watchful suspicion to all her sister states; and there can be little doubt that Venice had for some time past been dreaming of the possibility of making herself mistress of all Italy.* Under these circumstances the Senate judged, that it was very possible, that the war which appeared about to involve all the rest of Italy, might among its many incalculable consequences open valuable opportunities to them; while on the other hand it was not easy to see what the Lion of St. Mark could gain by taking an active part on either side of the quarrel. Venice therefore determined to remain neutral. And the Senate replied to the French ambassadors that it would be presumption in them to pretend to offer counsel to so wise a monarch as the present King of France—that it would be always agreeable to the Senate to hear of his prosperity and success, as was natural from the traditional respect and regard which Venice had always felt towards France;—and that it was therefore especially painful to them to be obliged to say that they were absolutely unable to afford him any active assistance in his present plans, in consequence of the very costly armaments they were obliged to keep constantly occupied in watching and protecting the outlying portions of the Venetian territory against the machinations of the Grand Turk;—that veritable bogie of the middle ages, the necessity for fighting or preparing to fight against whom was so constantly made an excuse by the politicians of Italy for doing what they wished, or declining to do what did not suit them.

From Florence the French ambassadors asked only a free passage across the Florentine territory for the French arms. Now the great bulk of the citizens, even of those who, belonging to the Medicean party, had a share in the government, were favourably disposed towards France, and

* Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, vol. i. p. 59, ed. cit.

as strongly disposed to feel hostilely towards the Neapolitan princes of the House of Aragon. But the inclinations of Pietro de' Medici were in diametrical opposition to those of the citizens in this respect. Principally by reason of his Orsini connections,* he had become entirely bound to the King of Naples, in whose army Virginio Orsini had taken service. Besides this, Pietro had discovered that those two young kinsmen of his, Lorenzo and Giovanni de' Medici, whose quarrel with the head of the family has been mentioned in a former chapter, had been entering into treasonable correspondence with Ludovico il Moro at Milan. Now these young men were, as has been said, very popular in Florence. Their "treason" against the usurping prince of a would-be free commonwealth was treason, which a large half, at least, of the citizens would be glad to see successful. Pietro had been very strongly bent on putting these cousins of his to death, when they were in his power, but had been, not without much difficulty, persuaded by the leading men of the circle of his more particular and personal friends, that on the whole, it was more prudent to spare their lives. It now became very questionable whether this departure from the principles laid down by Macchiavelli, as necessary for the guidance of a "prince" so circumstanced had indeed been prudent. Pietro felt all the precariousness and danger of his position; and saw clearly, in this foregathering of his treasonable cousins with Ludovico, an indication not to be neglected, that the coming struggle in Italy would be fatal either to him or to the Duke of Milan. Whatever, therefore, might be the interests and wishes of the city, it appeared absolutely necessary to Pietro that he should go heart and hand with Alfonso in the coming contest, and should therefore refuse the request made to Florence by the French ambassadors. Nevertheless, it was not desired

A.D. 1494.

* It will be remembered that both his mother and his wife belonged to that princely family.

A.D. 1494. to manifest any greater degree of hostility to the much-dreaded invaders than was absolutely necessary. The ambassadors were told, therefore, "in respectful and ornate language," as Guicciardini writes,* that "the desire of the Commonwealth to meet the wishes of so great and glorious a sovereign as the King of France, was immense;—that all the traditional feeling of Florence towards France urged the citizens in this direction; but that unhappily the Commonwealth was bound by a still unexpired treaty with the King of Naples, which expressly stipulated that Florence should not do the very thing which France was now asking her to do. It was impossible, therefore, to assent to the demand of the ambassadors; and Florence could only hope that, since so great and wise a king would be the first to recognize the absolute necessity that a State should loyally and honourably observe its engagements, the inability of the Commonwealth to act as it might wish on this point, would not be considered by France a matter of offence."

The retort of the King of France on receiving this rebuff was much more cleverly imagined than it would probably have been if it had not been counselled by the crafty and politic Ludovico. By his advice Charles contented himself with sending away the Florentine ambassadors at his court, and banishing from Lyons—not all the Florentine citizens, of whom considerable numbers were engaged in commercial and banking operations in that city—but only those employed in the bank of the Medici; thus notifying very markedly to Florence that he considered himself to have ground of offence against Pietro, and not against the city—separating him and his interests from those of the rest of the Florentines, and very clearly hinting that if this Jonah could be thrown overboard from

* Storia d' Italia, vol. i. p. 129, ed. cit.

the Florentine ship, all would go well between France and the Republic. A.D. 1494.

The hint was by no means lost upon the Florentines, but contributed not a little to fan that rising flame of indignation and discontent which other circumstances were rapidly bringing to a dangerous height in Florence. The cruelties and excesses which had been perpetrated by the French and Swiss troops at Rappallo, and had caused a thrill of horror and alarm to run throughout all Italy, had been repeated by them at Fivizzano, the first town they had reached after leaving the friendly territory of Milan, at Pontremoli. Fivizzano is the principal place of a small district called the Lunigiana, from the ancient, but now wholly destroyed, city of Luni, of which it once formed the territory. It is a narrow strip of hilly country, shut in between the higher Apennine and the sea; delicious in climate, lovely in scenery, and rich in olives; but producing of corn barely sufficient to feed its population for one month in the year. Nor is the access to the district such as to render the transport into it of provisions in large quantities possible, except at the cost of much labour and time. On emerging from this district southwards into Tuscany, the broad, shifting, and dangerous stream of the Magra has to be crossed, and the strong fortress of Sarzana, and the yet stronger one of Sarzanella, situated on the hill above it, to be passed. These were in the hands of the Florentines; and Pietro de' Medici, in arranging with Alfonso the plan of operations for the coming struggle, had undertaken the duty of defending this passage into Italy against the invaders. Of all the routes by which the French army could march southwards, this was the most easy to defend. The broad and impetuous Magra, extremely liable to dangerous floods at that season of the year—it was now November—formed an admirable line of defence; and when this was passed, though it might have

A.D. 1494. been possible for the French army to avoid the fortresses of Sarzana, and press towards Pisa, which city would easily have been raised in revolt against Florence, or to Lucca, which had already agreed by a secret convention with the Duke of Milan, to receive them, yet Charles was very unwilling, and it would have been very impolitic in him, to adopt that course. The prestige of the French name and the terror of the French valour and ferocity were at that time very strong in Italy; and the great advantages to be gained from this would have been very materially compromised by the avowal that the invading force was afraid to encounter the first opposition which it met with. At the present day the reputation of a general would not suffer in consequence of his declining to attack a strong fortress, if it was not absolutely necessary to the attainment of his ultimate object to do so. But those "noble boys at play," as the men of those ages have been somewhat too poetically called by one whose knowledge of the life of that time could have been but superficial, judged these matters differently. And Charles was quite right in thinking that it would have fatally compromised the prestige of his arms throughout the peninsula if he had left the fortresses of Sarzana and Sarzanella unattacked in his rear.

On the other hand, it was evidently impossible that the French army could remain long where it was. The mountain and sea-girt district of the Lunigiana was quite incapable of furnishing food for such a host for many days; and if only the passes out of that region had been defended with even moderate firmness and ability, the French army would have found itself in a very critical position. But there was probably very little expectation at Florence that the defence of these places would be either vigorous or successful; for the alarm in Florence at the position in which the city was about to be placed was becoming extreme. The barbarities which had been

practised at Fivizzano, when not only the troops who were found in the place, but also the unarmed inhabitants, had been massacred in considerable numbers, had produced a very painful effect on the minds of the Florentines. Such deeds were, says Guicciardini, "a new thing, and a cause of the greatest terror in Italy, which had for a long time past been accustomed to look on war rather in the light of a spectacle of pomp and magnificence than as a matter of danger and bloodshed." A.D. 1494.

The consequence of this terror in the city was of course an increased and ever increasing animosity against Pietro, who had placed the Commonwealth in such a position, and who now exhibited "no more constancy or magnanimity in adversity than either moderation or prudence in prosperity."* Of course, also, the large party in the city, which had always been hostile to the Medicean supremacy, and which had been of late very much increased by the personal ill qualities and unpopular manners of Pietro, were active in taking advantage of the alarm which reigned in the city, and the consequent animosity against him, to push matters to such extremity as might, they began to hope, cause the overthrow of his power.

The schemes of those who nourished such hopes were further favoured, says Guicciardini,† "by the nature of Pietro's government and by his own character, which caused him to be hated, not only by the enemies of his house, but were so displeasing even to his friends, as to be almost insupportable by them. Haughty and brutal in his manners, it was his nature to prefer being feared to being loved. His fierce and cruel disposition had led before that time to his having been concerned in midnight broils, involving even the loss of life. And with all this

* Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, vol. i. p. 177, ed. cit.

† Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 107.

A.D. 1494. he was so devoid of the gravity and seriousness which were so absolutely necessary to his position as the head of the government, that in those days of extreme danger to the city and to himself also, he would be seen publicly playing at ball in the streets."

Nevertheless, this stupid recklessness was suddenly changed to alarm and misgiving, when tidings came to Florence that the French troops were laying siege to Sarzana, while no help or support of any kind came from either Alfonso or the Pope, and it became evident that the invading army might be expected to make its appearance in hostile guise within a very few days before the gates of Florence! The startled tyrant seems also at the same time to have become aware that the exasperation in the city was rising rapidly to a menacing height. Day by day the habitual Florentine caution was giving way before the mingled anger and terror of the citizens, and the outcry against Pietro was becoming louder and bolder. At last the discontent in the city grew almost tumultuous; and Pietro, suddenly giving way to a panic as unworthy as his previous obstinacy and rashness had been foolhardy and unstatesmanlike, resolved on taking a step, the violence and reckless opposition of which to his previous policy gives the measure of his poverty of mind and incapacity.

Suddenly one evening he determined to go himself to the French king, who was before Sarzana, and see whether he could not thus conjure away the storm that threatened to break over Florence. He left the city accordingly, accompanied only by Jacopo Gianfigliazzi, Gianozzo Pucci, and a few other personal friends, and rode to Sarzana.

He was doubtless influenced in coming to this sudden resolution, thinks Guicciardini, by the remembrance of the similar and yet very dissimilar step, which his father Lorenzo had adopted with such brilliant success, when he went in the year 1479 to King Ferdinand of Naples,

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while that sovereign was at war with Florence, and "brought home with him peace for the city and security for himself."

"But it is clearly a very dangerous thing," says Guicciardini, "to be governed by examples, if the cases relied on are not entirely similar in all their details, as well as in their general outline;—if again the new circumstances be not treated with an equal degree of prudence;—and finally if, besides all these other requirements, the imitator be not equally favoured by fortune."

But it seems very probable that Pietro left the city because he became afraid to remain in it. There were tokens of the state of the public temper which, to any one who knew Florence, would have seemed to render such an apprehension not unreasonable. And he no doubt was moved also by the consideration, that the only chance of allaying the general discontent, and reseizing the position from which he was falling, lay in his finding the means of averting the danger which was terrifying the citizens.

Arrived at Pietrasanta, he there awaited a safe-conduct from the French king, who sent the Bishop of St. Malo, and certain other courtiers, to bring him in safety into the French camp. When he arrived there the French had already taken Sarzana, and were occupied in laying siege to the much stronger fortress of Sarzanella, without, however, as yet any prospect of being able to take it. Philippe de Comines says* that Pietro arrived in the French camp before the submission of Sarzana. But it appears from his narrative that he was not present himself at that time, and the representation of the matter by Guicciardini is no doubt the more accurate one. De Comines is also in error in supposing that a deputation of Florentine

* Mémoires, lib. viii. an. 1494.

A.D. 1494. citizens, which, he says, had previously to Pietro's arrival presented itself in the French camp, had come thither "with his consent." It is very likely that some of the citizens may have been beforehand with Pietro in visiting the French king, and attempting to make terms with him in favour of the city. But any such intrigue must have been undertaken by the party opposed to the Medici, must have proceeded secretly, and certainly not with Pietro's consent. Indeed, De Comines says that the only object with most of those who composed this deputation, was to induce the French monarch to go to Florence for the purpose of driving out Pietro de' Medici. And the probability is that the Florentines, whom De Comines supposes to have formed the "deputation," were, in fact, those two young cousins of Pietro whose quarrel with the head of the family has been mentioned, and their friends. Sismondi is in error also in saying* that Pietro came as ambassador from the Republic. Pietro's departure from Florence was sudden, counselled only by his own panic, and decided on without consultation with even the small knot of his own more intimate friends and counsellors.†

Pietro was introduced into the French camp by the courtiers who had been sent to Pietrasanta to meet him, and placed in communication with negotiators, who proceeded to arrange the terms on which the French army would consent to traverse Tuscany as friends and not as armed enemies. The Frenchmen demanded that a French garrison should be placed in Sarzana, that Sarzanella should be ceded to them, and that Pietrasanta, Pisa, Leghorn, and Ripafratta, then an important fortress, should all be given up into their hands! It was demanding not only that the keys of the country should be entrusted to them, —for such were Sarzana, Sarzanella, and Pietrasanta;—but

* Histoire des Français, vol. xv. p. 171.

† See Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 103.

that the entire territory should submit to a French occupation. And Pietro de' Medici, evidently acting under the influence of a panic and abject terror, granted all as soon as asked. The French negotiators were astounded at his readiness to accede to everything and anything that could be demanded of him. "Those who treated the matter with the above-mentioned Pietro," says De Comines,* "have related to me, and have told many other persons, laughing and ridiculing his weakness, that they were astounded at the facility with which he accorded demands so enormous, that they had never expected they could be granted." A.D. 1494.

All having been thus quickly and easily settled, the French king marched on to Pisa, which, as well as the other fortresses, had been at once consigned into his hands by the orders of Pietro, without waiting for any even formal submission of the treaty to the Florentine government; and this Medici dared to return to Florence with the account of what he had done!

It seems impossible to suppose that he could have been aware of the real state of feeling in the city. Tyrants never are aware of the real condition of the social atmosphere around them. Pietro knew that the city was unfavourable to his alliance with the King of Naples, was disposed, on the contrary, to draw towards France and Milan, and was under the influence of extreme alarm at the near prospect of having a hostile French army at the gates, with nothing to prevent them from treating Florence as they had treated Rappallo and Fivizzano. Pietro knew all this, and having no spark of feeling in his own breast that prevented him from seeking relief from his own terror by concessions not only shameful to Florence, but specially disgraceful to himself, in that they involved treachery to his own allies, and the stultification of the whole previous

* See Guicciardini, *ibid.*

A.D. 1494. course of his policy, there was nothing to tell him that Florence, terrified as she was, was yet not so vile as he;—that the immoral tyranny and still more immoral blandishments of his father and himself had not yet so entirely crushed all the old pride and civil virtue out of her, as that she could tamely submit to be thus handed over unconsulted, like a chattel, from one tyrant to another. For true it is, that Florence was on the way towards that depth of degradation, and that in a few more years she had reached it. But it had not come to that quite yet. There was still a Piero Capponi in Florence;—and more dangerous still to the usurper, though he was no Florentine, there was a Savonarola.

Pietro returned from his ill-omened expedition on the 8th of November,* and immediately proceeded to the Palazzo Pubblico to inform the Signoria of the results of his negotiation. It is probable that he did not reach the palace without becoming in some degree aware of the exacerbated state of the public feeling towards him. It was a great mistake, apart from the miserable results of his journey to the French camp, to have left the city at such a moment. Macchiavelli would assuredly have counselled his "prince" against so dangerous a step. No sooner had he left the city than the discontent began to show itself in a more menacing manner. Men began to say openly that it was time to liberate the city from a domination which, if it had been tolerable under a Lorenzo the Magnificent, was altogether intolerable under such a man as Pietro. And even those who were counted in the city as his friends did not lift up their voices in contradiction. Even the Signoria itself, which had of course been chosen as men on whom the Medici could implicitly rely, did not venture, and perhaps did not wish to do anything towards checking

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 109.

the manifestation of public feeling. Messer Luca Corsini, A.D. 1494
one of the Signoria, who had been considered a thorough-going partisan and creature of the Medici, now avowed himself their implacable enemy. This man, availing himself of his position in the palace, had on one occasion, when the Signory were in debate on the agitated condition of the city, rushed "furiously," says Guicciardini,* to the great bell, the well-known and sinister note of which had still power to move the social world of Florence to its profoundest depths, with the intention of rousing the city to instant revolution. Curiously great in Florence was the power of him who could obtain access to that jealously-guarded bell-rope, which could send dismay, insurrection, and revolution booming over the city from San Gallo to San Niccolo in a few moments! A subsequent tyrant, made wiser by experience, plucked this palladium of the old Florentine liberties from its proud elevation, and cast it out. But he was a priest; and Florence was by that time indeed fallen.

On the present occasion, Luca Corsini was able, before the other magistrates, who rushed after him to hold his hand, could prevent him, to cause the bell to boom out its hoarse call only twice or thrice. But even that was enough, though it was the third hour after sunset, to fill the Piazza with anxious citizens, ready at the summons to "restore liberty to Florence" after the old fashion of their fathers. But the old brawling peal which had so often made every Florentine heart jump into its owner's throat did not ring out. The bell was once more silent; and the citizens, not knowing what augury to draw from the omen, returned slowly and doubtfully to their homes. But the agitation which had been thus caused did not subside, and the city was heaving dangerously with ill-restrained emotion when Pietro arrived from Sarzana and betook himself to the palace.

* Storia Fiorentina, *ibid.* p. 109.

A.D. 1494. Pietro made his astounding report; and it would seem to have been received in cold silence, or at least without any open manifestations of indignation or opposition on the part of the magistrates. It is clear, however, that he had seen enough of the state of men's minds in the city that day to warn him to make what provision he could against the coming storm. For on the morning of the 9th it was known in the city that Paolo Orsini, Pietro's kinsman, had been summoned by him in haste, and had arrived at the city gates with five hundred horsemen.

But things had gone too far for the city to be quieted by any such means. The presence of Orsini and his cavalry only served to convince those who had manifested their hostility to the tyrant, that no time was to be lost if they would secure their own safety. Violence was evidently intended; and if Orsini could have managed to lay hands on some half-dozen of the leading malcontents before the city had committed itself to absolute insurrection, it might even then have been possible to crush the rising discontent of the people under an united Medicean and French tyranny. But the citizens were too active, and too much aware of the manner in which such things were wont to be managed in Florence, to permit this. The Signory, now openly and wholly hostile to Pietro, and the present order of things, were already assembled in the palace, when Pietro, putting a bold face upon the matter, rode thither from the Medicean palace in the Via Larga, with a number of mounted attendants and armed men at his back, and presenting himself at the great doors, which were fast closed and barred, demanded that they should be opened to him. He still imagined that so much of authority yet lingered around his name, that none of these who were in the palace—old and hitherto faithful adherents of his house every one of them—would venture to refuse to admit him. But Jacopo de' Nerli, one of the

Priors, together with some others of the Signory well armed, had stationed themselves at the door, and took upon themselves the task of keeping it shut. By them it was replied to Pietro's demand to have the gates opened to him and his armed followers, that the great gates would not be opened ;—that he might enter if he pleased, but by the postern, and alone. A.D. 1494.

Had the gates of the palace been opened to Pietro and his armed followers it is probable that the nascent revolution might have been crushed and suffocated in the blood of all those who had been prominent in promoting it. Had Pietro, on the other hand, acceded to the proposal made to him to enter alone into the palace, it is most likely that he would never have left it again alive, and that the conspirators for the overthrow of his house, having so far stained their hands with blood, would have made their work sure, and sought to make themselves safe by the massacre of his brothers also.

But both parties were sufficiently prudent to avert either of these results. Pietro seeing, when refused admittance into the palace, that the game was up, hurried back through the already rising tumult of the city to his house; but hearing very shortly after he had reached it that the Signory, composed of men whom he had so lately supposed to be his fastest friends, had, without one dissentient voice, pronounced him a rebel and an outlaw, that they were calling together the citizens, and that the people were rapidly thronging the Piazza and the streets with cries of "*Popolo*" and "*Libertà,*" he gave up all for lost, and mounting his horse rode out of the San Gallo gate, and made the best of his way to Bologna.

The Cardinal—Pietro's brother Giovanni, he who was afterwards Pope Leo X.—showed a greater degree of courage than his elder brother, and, together with Pier Antonio Carnesecchi and a few other still faithful friends, well armed,

A.D. 1494. made a last attempt to assert the Medicean authority and put down the insurrection by a bold exercise of force. But it very soon became apparent to them that the hope was vain. "The people multiplied themselves against Pietro," as Guicciardini phrases it;* and the Cardinal, in the disguise of a friar, was glad enough to find himself outside the city gates, and on the open Bologna road, following the same path as Pietro. The other brother, Giuliano, who was still a mere lad, also followed his elders into exile.

And thus began the period of the FIRST † exile of the Medici.

* Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 110.

† Of course not counting the exile of Cosmo, pater patriæ, which occurred before he could be said to have attained to supreme authority.

BOOK IX.

FROM THE EXILE OF THE MEDICI IN 1494,

TO

THE RETURN OF THE MEDICI A.D. 1512.

18 YEARS.

CHAPTER I.

Anecdote of Pietro de' Medici and Ludovico il Moro—Confusion in Florence after the flight of Pietro—The populace without guidance—save that of Savonarola in his sermons in the Duomo—His prudence—The palace of the Medici and others sacked—Savonarola absent from the city—The French king at Pisa—He gives the Pisans their liberty—Florentine commissaries driven out—The French king at Signa—Sends messengers thence to Pietro de' Medici at Bologna—Views prevailing in the French court and camp respecting Florence—Misgivings of the Florentines—Entry of the king into Florence—State of public feeling in Florence—Savonarola's "Flagellum Dei"—Personal appearance of the French king—He refuses to have his horse led by members of the Signoria—Dangerous position of the French army in Florence—Progress of King Charles from the gate to the palace of the Medici—Impression made by Florence on the minds of the French—Sudden alarm in Florence—Fight between the Swiss soldiers and the townsmen—Negotiations with the king—The wife and mother of Pietro get about him—Four commissioners for conducting the negotiations with the French king—Francesco Valori—Pietro Capponi—Exorbitant pretensions of the French—Attempts to re-impose the Medici—Rejected with indignation by the Florentines—They consent to treat on the footing of a money payment to be made by the city—The French king's ultimatum—Torn before his face by Capponi—Florentine answer to French insolence—Treaty as ultimately agreed to—The French quit Florence.

Guicciardini in the third chapter of his general history of Italy relates that when Pietro de' Medici went to meet the French king at Sarzana, he wished to take the opportunity of complimenting Ludovico Sforza, who was then also about to arrive in the French camp, by meeting him on his approach to it; but that Ludovico having missed his way, and consequently reached the camp by a different road from that by which he was expected, the two princes

A.D. 1494. failed to meet. And Pietro subsequently apologised to the Duke of Milan for the seeming neglect, by telling him the cause of his not having seen him. Whereupon Ludovico quickly answered, as the historian records: "Yes; it is clear enough that one or other of us has missed his road; but I am inclined to think that it is you who have missed yours;"—meaning, that in the critical state of things, which the conduct of both of them had brought about in Italy, it would turn out that Pietro had done worse for himself than he, Ludovico, had done for himself. Assuredly, both of them had very greatly "missed their road;" though the subtle Ludovico was right enough in judging already that Pietro's error was the more fatal of the two.

The confusion in Florence, and the tumult both in the streets of the city and in the minds of the citizens, had been terrible after the departure of Pietro on his expedition to Sarzana. It seemed to those who were old enough to remember days now sixty years ago, that the old times had come back again in Florence. The citizens came out into the Piazza, and the old cries, "*Popolo*" and "*Libertà*," were heard once more. And arms were once again to be seen in the hands of the people. It had, of course, been one main anxiety of the Medici to prevent the citizens from possessing such dangerous playthings. And there remained but few arms in the city. But in those memorable days whatever weapons could be found in garret or cellar were brought forth into the streets.* Old arms of disused fashion, memorials of a bygone day, were seen among the crowd, and awakened reminiscences of the time when Florence had not yet known the "*governo di un solo.*"

But in the old time, leaders had never been wanting to

* Nardi, Istorie di Firenze, lib. i. ad ann. 1494.

the people; and it had been very clear to every man what he wished, on which side he was to range himself, who were his friends, and who his enemies. But now an universal uncertainty and misgiving was the prominent feeling in every mind. It would have been easy for the populace to make itself masters of the city, but there was no one to guide the masses, or to whom they could trust. "The old partisans of Liberty were almost all dead in the sixty years during which the Medicean supremacy had lasted. The few citizens who still had any knowledge of or post in the management of state affairs, were men who had always lived as adherents of the Medici. And the multitude suddenly liberated from despotic rule could do of itself nothing but fall into licence and anarchy. It was, therefore, one of those terrible moments when no man can say from one hour to another what excesses and atrocities may be committed. The populace ran to and fro through the streets all day long like an impetuous river; it cast sinister and menacing glances on the dwellings of those citizens who had accumulated wealth by the oppression of the people; but it found no guidance anywhere, save at the hour when all the city thronged the Duomo." * A.D. 1494.

There, in the person of a Dominican friar, was the only man who could in those days give any guidance, or was capable of ruling the multitude. And great was the debt of gratitude which Florence owed Savonarola for the manner in which he used the power in his hands. "One inconsiderate word from his mouth," continues Professor Villari, "would have sufficed to give up to sack and pillage the wealthier citizens' houses, to reproduce the old scenes of intestine warfare, and cause the spilling of rivers of blood. For the people had suffered many wrongs, and the thirst for vengeance was great." But in those critical

* Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. i. p. 196.

A.D. 1494. moments Savonarola was as prudent as he was fiery and impassioned at need. No word escaped his lips, save exhortations to charity, moderation, and above all, civil unity. And it was assuredly due to him that a revolution which there was every reason to fear would have been accomplished amid disorder, anarchy, and bloodshed in the Piazza, was brought to pass, as has been seen, with comparative order, and freedom from excesses.

With *comparative* freedom from excess, and with very much less than might have been expected from the circumstances. For as soon as it became generally known in the city that the Medici had left it, flying for their lives, and that the Signory had pronounced them outlaws, with a reward of five thousand florins to whosoever should consign into the hands of the magistrates either Pietro, or his brother the Cardinal, alive, or of two thousand florins for their dead bodies, the populace rushed, with no less a man than Francesco Valori at their head, to the palace of the Medici in the Via Larga, and sacked it from roof to cellar. They sacked and burned the houses of his intimate ministers—Antonio, son of Bernardo del Nero, and Messer Giovanni da Pratovecchio. And it was only when they were on the point of burning a third house, that of Messer Agnolo Niccolini, that some of the more influential citizens of the popular party succeeded in restraining the fury of the mob, "fearing that this licence *might run to too great a length.*" * By any one who saw Florence in its then mood, it would have been judged that the possibility of any restoration of the Medici was remote indeed. Bernardo del Nero and Niccolò Ridolfi, seeing how the tide was running, and hoping that it might not yet be too late to make a sudden tack, and run before the gale, rode into the Piazza at the head of a body of armed men crying,

* The words, but not the italics, are those of Guicciardini.

"*Popolo e Libertà!*" But the taint of their Medicean partisanship was still too strongly on them; the people would none of them, and drove them back to their houses, not without considerable danger to their lives. A.D. 1494.

But it ought in fairness to be told, that Savonarola was not at that time in the city. He had been one of an embassy sent by Florence on the 5th of November to wait on the king at Pisa, and ascertain what were his intentions with regard to Florence. And from this embassy he did not return till after Pietro's departure, and the subsequent outburst of popular fury.

It was known, however, in Florence that the interview of the ambassadors with the king had been far from satisfactory, and that there was every reason to believe that Pietro de' Medici had found means to ingratiate himself with Charles, and in all probability obtain from him a promise to replace him by force in his Florentine supremacy. These tidings had reached the city by the mouth of Francesco Valori, who had been to Pisa, andspok en with the ambassadors after their interview with the king. He came spurring hard to Florence with the news, and arriving hot and travel-stained in the Piazza, just as the rage of the people was on the point of boiling over, and himself angry and excited by the news he brought, had not hesitated to put himself at their head. But Savonarola had not yet returned to Florence.

The city was thus once more in a state of "liberty;" and called on to resume the functions of self-government. And it must be admitted that the circumstances under which it was suddenly deprived of every semblance of a regular government, and cast upon its own resources, were far from being favourable to the enterprise,—were, indeed, on the contrary, terribly pregnant with anxiety and danger. On that same 9th of November on which the Medici fled from the city, and the citizens learned with dismay, and

A.D. 1494. almost with despair, that the last act of the tyrant had dismembered the territory of the Commonwealth, and stripped the majesty of Florence of its most important and valuable dependencies, Charles had reached Pisa. And though the arrangement made by him with Pietro had only contemplated placing the Pisan fortresses in the hands of the French as a temporary guarantee, reserving to the Florentines their supremacy over the city and its territory, it very soon became evident that the evil was a far greater one than that. In the course of that very first evening after his arrival in Pisa, a deputation of Pisan citizens presented themselves before the king, imploring him to restore to the city its ancient liberty, and free it from the Florentine yoke. They spoke eloquently of the past glorious history of Pisa, of its ancient supremacy and the high place it once held among the cities of Europe, and of the comparatively recent and upstart aggrandizement of Florence. Charles knew little and cared less about the ancient glories of Pisa, and the relative position in which the two cities of the Arno had once stood towards each other. But it was easier and pleasanter to say "yes" than to say "no" to the eloquent entreaties of the Pisan orators, who were assuring him that he was the greatest of mortal men, and that their hope under heaven rested in him alone. So, while all that he cared about in the matter was the placing of a sufficient French garrison in the citadel, and thus assuring to himself the substantial command of the city, Charles said "yes;" and the revolution which restored liberty to Pisa, and undid the work it had cost the Florentines years of struggle and mountains of treasure to accomplish, was completed in a few minutes so thoroughly that the French Jove, whose nod was thus shaking the spheres, had to send in all haste a guard of soldiers to save the lives of the Florentines who were residing in Pisa in official positions, from the un-

loosed rage and hatred of their emancipated subjects.* There were Tanai de' Nerli, Pietro Capponi, Pietro Corsini, and Pietro Guicciardini; and having been guarded during the night by the French soldiers, they left Pisa the next day for Florence in company with the king, and had to bear the news of this new calamity to their fellow-citizens. A.D. 1494.

Charles, leaving Pisa on the 10th of November, lodged that night at Empoli, and on the night of the 11th at Signa; where he remained some days, until it should become somewhat clearer than it then appeared in what guise and character he was to enter Florence. During this stay at Signa, he sent couriers to Bologna after Pietro de' Medici, offering to take him with him into Florence. But Pietro had already gone on to Venice, and the king's messengers did not find him. The fact was, that Charles and his counsellors were very much mystified as to the bearings of Florentine politics, and consequently as to their own position in the country, and the relations that were to be supposed to exist between them and the Tuscans. Were they about to enter Florence as friends or as enemies? And if as friends, was the friendship to be understood as resulting from the submission of the city to the victorious progress of the French arms? This seems to have been the theory of the matter entertained by Charles and his courtiers. With the exception of the short and half-hearted attempt at resistance which had been made at Sarzana, Charles had marched from the Alps into the very heart of Italy without the necessity of striking a blow. And though he had in fact been enabled to do so only by the favour of Ludovico, and the terror-stricken treason of Pietro, yet the notion in the French camp was, that Italy was prostrating herself in submission to the victorious flag of France, as fast as it

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 112.

A.D. 1494. appeared above the crest of each successive hill.* Nevertheless Charles had misgivings about his approach to Florence. He was aware, that after the departure of Pietro, the whole city had remained, and was still, in arms; and he feared that a disaster might ensue from pouring his troops into the midst of an armed and excited population, and into the narrow defiles of a city in which every house was a fortress.

On the other hand, the Florentines had also many misgivings and doubts as to the intentions of Charles with regard to their city. The act he had done at Pisa, rending from the Florentines their most-prized possession, and in their minds almost, if not quite, dooming the city to ruin, went a great way towards disposing the Florentines to regard him as an enemy. The inferences drawn thence were much stronger than the facts in reality warranted. Charles had done the deed, which to the Florentine mind seemed so fateful and terrible, almost without knowing what he was doing, and probably without at all understanding the real nature of the boon the Pisans were asking of him. Guicciardini thinks that the French king when he left Pisa to march towards Florence, really had the intention of sacking the latter city,—an intention which he abandoned only on obtaining information of the armed attitude of the citizens.† Some thought that he meant to make himself sovereign of Florence, and others, that he would content himself with replacing Pietro and the Medicean dynasty. Ambassadors went to and fro between Florence and Signa on behalf of both parties; and it was at last agreed that Charles should find the city gates open to him, and should enter them in friendly guise. He did so on Sunday, the 17th of November, 1494.

"A very magnificent, decorous, and beautiful thing was

* Sismondi, Histoire des Français, vol. xv. ad ann. 1494.

† Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 115.

the king's entry into Florence," says Guicciardini,* "such as had not been seen in the city for a long time." But it may be doubted whether the minds of any of those who made up the show were much attuned to enjoy its splendours. And even the Florentine populace itself, much as it in general loved such pageants, can hardly be supposed to have seen with much pleasure the French troops, splendid as they may have been, marching into their city. A.D. 1494.

All the Signoria, according to ancient usage on similar occasions, went on foot to meet their royal guest at the Porta San Frediano, the gate of the city which looks towards Leghorn. A large band of the wealthiest young men of the city accompanied them on horseback in splendid gala dresses. A hustings, gay with coloured tapestry, had been erected in the immediate neighbourhood of the gray and frowning old gateway, which symbolised far more truthfully the feelings of the citizens towards the strangers. And the Signory took their places on the former erection to welcome the king, and be present at the Latin † speech, with which the Secretary of the Commonwealth, in accordance with the usual form, was to receive him.‡

"But the principal magnificence and sumptuosity," says Guicciardini,§ "was on the part of the king." He entered into Florence with all his army under arms. First

* Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 117.

† Messer Luca Corsini had been entrusted with this honourable charge. But just as he was beginning his harangue, the rain began to fall heavily; and in the confusion which followed Messer Luca's speech was lost. But a certain Gaddi, in the service of the Signory, being prompt of tongue, and endowed with presence of mind, stepped forward and addressed a few fitting words to the King in French. See the MS. accounts quoted by Villari.

‡ Ricordi Storici de Filippo di Cino Rinuccini, dal 1282 al 1460, colla continuazione di Alamanno e Neri suoi figli fino al 1506, per cura ed opera di G. Aiazzi, Firenze, 1840. A most valuable and admirably edited volume of various records extracted from the Rinuccini muniment room, by Signor Aiazzi, the librarian of the Rinuccini library. This account of the entry of King Charles is, as appears from the above dates, by an eye-witness.

§ Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 117.

A.D. 1494. came the infantry, in great part Swiss; then the battering train and the artillery,—guns on four wheels, which, drawn by horses, absolutely kept pace with the infantry on the march and in the field, a new and wonderful thing! unlike the clumsy oxen-drawn cannon which were all that the Italians had to oppose to them;—and then the splendid cavalry, composed of the French chivalry, among whom were a large sprinkling of Scottish cavaliers. Last of all came the king in complete armour, marching under a canopy, "in the guise," says Guicciardini, "of a triumphant conqueror, a spectacle in itself very grand, but for which the spectators had small liking, by reason of the dread and terror which filled the mind of every one."

In order to understand aright the state of public feeling in Florence at this time, it is necessary to bear in mind the march of events and circumstances which had modified it, and caused it to veer and vacillate. Popular feeling in Florence had always been traditionally favourable to France. The old Florentine Guelphism first generated this sympathy. It was further increased by the hostility to the rival house of Aragon in Naples. It was at the present moment further strengthened by the unpopularity of Pietro de' Medici, and by his much-disliked alliance with the King of Naples, against whom the expedition of the French king was especially undertaken. Besides all this, the man who at the present moment had a far greater influence than any other on the popular mind of Florence, a paramount influence, indeed, which could for the time direct the passions and sympathies of the people as he chose, had eagerly invoked and looked for this coming of the French king. He was the "new Cyrus;"—"the sword of the Lord"—"the executor of righteous judgment;"—the "Flagellum Dei." But then the *Flagellum Dei* was expected to act as such;—that is to say, strictly in accordance with the programme laid down for him by the prophet. He was to be an

instrument of wrath against God's enemies,—especially against an infamous and simoniacal Pope at Rome, and against an usurping and evil-doing tyrant at Florence. And as such the liberal party in Florence, which the excess of Pietro's personal unpopularity and bad government had made for the time equal to nearly the whole population, were ready and anxious to receive and welcome him. But if the "Flagellum Dei" so far forgot his functions as to foregather with tyrants, and become a *flagellum* mainly to their oppressed subjects,—why the advent of this French instrument of Providence would have to be regarded in a very different light. A.D. 1494.

And there were very ugly symptoms of such misfeasance being not improbable. This French king, who begins by getting possession of our fortresses by underhand means, —who next takes it upon himself to detach from us our dependencies,—ours at the expense of such long years of struggle, so much blood, and what is better remembered, so much money;—who then tampers with the fugitive tyrant, whom we have pronounced an outlaw;—and lastly, and most ill-looking of all, who receives our ambassadors with studied coldness, and evades all frank and decisive statement with regard to his intentions towards us;—such a visitor with upwards of twenty thousand armed men at his back, comes surely in very questionable guise.

Savonarola, who had spoken with the king at Pisa after the other ambassadors had quitted his presence, and had in doing so mixed splendid promises in case he should confine himself in Italy to the proper functions of a *Flagellum Dei*, with dreadful comminatory warnings of the consequences that would ensue on a different line of conduct,—Savonarola deemed that he had produced a powerful effect on the king's mind, and hoped that the coming of the invading army would be a blessing to Italy. And the people therefore were inclined to hope as their

A.D. 1494. prophet and leader hoped. Still matters did not look well. Other ambassadors had, as was said, been sent to the king during these days of his stay at Signa; but they had been able to obtain from him no satisfactory declaration of his intentions towards Florence. And during those very same days he had sent off messengers after the fugitive Pietro, with offers to take him back with him to Florence. This did not look as if that denunciatory address of the friar to the king at Pisa had produced all the effect which the former flattered himself it had brought about, and to which the friar's biographer seems inclined to attribute no less efficacy.* To all the endeavours of the Florentine ambassadors, to induce him to sign a treaty, or terms of understanding with Florence, the only answer that could be got from the king was that he would arrange everything when he reached "the great city"—"la gran *villa*," as the Italian historians, preserving not without a sneer the royal French-Italian, have recorded.†

Under these circumstances it is very easily understood that the magnificence of the king's entry into the city, with his army, should have been, as Guicciardini says, "*poco gustata*"—not enjoyed with much gusto by the citizens.

At all events, the royal person, even under the most magnificent of canopies, did not contribute much to the impressiveness of the show. Charles, we are told, was of weakly constitution, of small stature, and almost deformed in appearance. Nor could his reception of the learned oration of the Secretary of the Commonwealth have been of much interest to those who were so eagerly witnessing it. For the French monarch "was scarcely acquainted with the letters of the alphabet; he had neither sense nor judgment; he was greedy of power, but incapable

* Villari, Vita, vol. i. p. 209.
† Nardi, lib. i., ad ann. 1494.

of maintaining any semblance of majesty in his deportment."* A.D. 1494.

The entry however of the French army took place without giving rise to any disturbance, or breach of the peace, which was more than some of those, who witnessed it, had ventured to expect. The king manifested a disposition to be courteous, says Guicciardini,† "in that, when certain of the Signory were about to take the bridle-rein of his horse on either side, and thus lead him through the city, according to the usual etiquette on similar occasions, Charles would by no means allow them to do so. All which *may* have proceeded from the French king's modest desire to decline so great an honour at the hands of the Florentine magistrates, as the Florentine historian thought. But may it not also have been suggested by Charles's unwillingness to find himself thus flanked on either side by persons of whom he knew nothing, save that they were the chiefs of a city, his relations with which were of so very doubtful and precarious a kind? May not his Majesty, so small of stature, so weakly as he was, have not unreasonably preferred as he passed under that frowning and grim old gateway, to have on either side of him some of his own stalwart knights as his supporters? For it is very evident that the prevailing feeling of distrust was mutual. The king was almost as much afraid of the Florentines, under the circumstances in which he was now placing himself, as they were of him. And he had fair reason for being so. He was advancing into the heart of a city, which had been built in its almost every part with a view to the eventualities of street warfare, in which every

* See the account of Professor Villari, who has summarised the records on this subject of the contemporary writers. Vita di Savonarola, vol. i. p. 182.

† "Usò un segno d' umanità." Storia Fiorentina, Opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 117.

A.D. 1494. house was more or less a fortress, and the principal houses very formidable fortresses;—a city of narrow tortuous streets overhung by lofty beetle-browed buildings, from the upper stories and roofs of which, the inhabitants, without other aid, might have destroyed him and all his army, had fitting preparations for the execution of such a purpose been made. And in point of fact there were large bodies of armed men, citizens and the inhabitants of the "*contado*" hidden in the churches and monasteries, ready to act in case the conduct of the strangers should be such as to make it necessary.

There can be little doubt indeed that Charles was committing a military fault in thus trusting himself and his army to the chances of such a situation. And it is probable that the French leaders were only induced to do so by the prevailing feeling, which had been generated in the army by their extraordinary unopposed advance from the Alps to the very centre of Italy, that they were marching in victorious triumph through a country which lacked both the power and the will to withstand them, and that they were indeed instruments in the hands of an over-ruling power, in whose decrees it was written that the beautiful country they had so ardently coveted was indeed to become the heritage of France.* *Dieu protège la France!* And when He does so after a fashion so thoroughly within the scope of a French army's comprehension, Frenchmen are apt to feel pious.

So Charles and his army marched on in the path of manifest destiny under the towered gateway of San Frediano, though not without some misgiving; and the citizens watched them as they did so, with a curiously similar mixture of hope and fear. The strangers passed

* For the extent to which this persuasion prevailed in the ranks of the French army, see Villari, Vita di Savonarola, lib. ii. chap. i.

on through the Borgo San Frediano, the Fondaccio * San Jacopo, and so over the Ponte Vecchio to the Piazza della Signoria, and thence to the Duomo, where Charles alighted to visit and reverence the high altar. Mounting again after this act of piety, he proceeded the short remaining distance from the Cathedral to the Palace of the Medici † at the bottom of the Via Larga, where apartments had been prepared for him—the latter part of his progress however being made without any canopy;—that rich piece of upholstery having been made booty of by the populace, while the king was at his short devotions, "according to ancient custom" as old Jacopo Nardi tells us.‡ A.D. 1494.

In vain did the Frenchmen strive to conceal their astonished admiration of all they saw. They would willingly have adopted the *nil admirari* stoicism of the red Indian; for, like him when brought into the presence of the white man, they felt that the surprise which they could not suppress was a testimony to the superior civilization and splendour of the Italian life, and a confession of the comparative meanness and poverty of all they had left at home. Never before had the monarch of France seen a dwelling to be compared to the Florentine merchant's house in which he was now received. At every fresh vista of the streets and piazzas of the city, which their passage through it opened to their eyes, the French knights and soldiers could not repress their astonishment at the massive grandeur of the buildings on all sides.§

And within a day or two an accident occurred, which

* The streets which run along the bank of the Arno, on the southern or Oltrarno side of the river, are so called. The term has reference to the subsoil works necessary for the foundation of those building on the river bank.

† That now known as the Palazzo Riccardi.

‡ Istoria Fiorentina, vol. i. p. 48, edit. Firenze, 1842.

§ Villari, lib. ii. chap. iii.; Guicciardini, Storia Fioren., chap. xii.; Istorie Fioren. ad ann. 1494.

A.D. 1494. not only astonished them, but carried a salutary warning with it, which in all probability was not without its use, in contributing to the ultimately pacific termination of this perilous visit. A sudden report was spread through the city that Pietro de' Medici had returned, and was at the gates with an armed following, about to attempt to resume his position in the city by force. The bell of the Palazzo Vecchio,—*the* bell of Florence, sent a sudden and violent peal over the city. Instantly the streets were swarming with citizens. The earth seemed to send forth armed men. In one moment the shops were shut; and every palace turned into a fortress. The towers were armed, and preparations made for closing the streets according to the old Florentine custom in times of civil disturbance. On that day, as Professor Villari remarks, the Frenchmen had their first experience of city barricades. The news was false, however, and was soon generally known to be so. And the effervescence subsided as rapidly as it had risen. But the circumstance had given the strangers a hint of possibilities, which made its due impression on them.

On another occasion a quarrel, which at first threatened to lead to serious consequences, broke out between the townsmen and a portion of the French army. The Swiss soldiers, who were lodged in the neighbourhood of the Porta al Prato,—the gate that looks towards the modern Cascine,—having conceived some suspicion or other, attempted to force their way through the long street leading from that gate to the centre of the city, called the Borg' Ognisanti, with a view of reaching the King's lodgings. But the artisan inhabitants of that thickly populated part of the city, not well understanding the purpose and object of the strangers, would not permit them to pass. A storm of missiles from the windows and roofs drove back the soldiers in confusion, and compelled

them to desist from "this insult" to the city, as old Nardi calls it.* The fight lasted, however, more than an hour, and was only suppressed at last by the intervention of the superior officers on the one side, and of several influential citizens on the other, all equally conscious of the paramount importance of preventing any such outbreak from assuming larger proportions. A.D. 1494.

Meantime debates, which more than once threatened to degenerate into open quarrels, were going on between the King and the Signory respecting the claims which he conceived that his position entitled him to make on the city. The wife and mother of Pietro de' Medici, both princesses of the feudal house of Orsini, had obtained access to the King, and were urging him, with all the arts which such women know so well how to bring to bear on such men as Charles, to restore the house of Medici to the position it had lost. The French monarch had, besides, some notion of keeping the supremacy of the city in his own hands by the instrumentality of Pietro. It became very soon evident that the ideas and purposes of the negotiating parties were very far indeed asunder.

The commissioners elected by the Signory for the conducting of these negotiations with the French King and his counsellors, were four in number, Messer Domenico Bonsi, Messer Guidantonio Vespucci, Francesco Valori, and Pietro Capponi. The first two were men who had grown old in the public service of the Republic, Vespucci mainly as a statist and constitutional lawyer, Bonsi as a diplomatist. But the latter two have left names which occupy a prominent place in history. Francesco Valori had been an adherent of the Medici in the days of Lorenzo. But like so many others he had been estranged and disgusted by the conduct, both public and private, of Pietro.

* Istoria Fiorentina, vol. i. p. 50, ed. cit.

A.D. 1494. And in these latter days, when the misgovernment of that tyrant had reached the pitch of alienating the most valuable possessions of the Commonwealth, Valori had become a violent partisan of the popular party. He it was, as we have seen, who had brought from Pisa the news of the unsatisfactory reception which the Florentine ambassadors had met with from the King, arriving with it just in time to put himself at the head of the excited crowd who rushed from the Piazza to the sacking of the palace of the Medici. From that time forth he became one of the most,—perhaps the most influential popular leader in Florence. And he was a man whose natural qualities were perfectly well adapted for such a post. He was an energetic, prompt, rough, hot-headed man, not largely endowed with that cautious prudence which was so highly valued by the cultivated classes of his contemporaries, but abounding in the prompt and energetic eloquence, and readiness for thorough-going action, which are such strong recommendations to popular favour. In the agitated and difficult times which followed the proscription of Pietro and his brothers, Francesco Valori will be found playing a prominent part.

But the fourth commissioner was the most remarkable man of them all. Pietro Capponi was one of those men, who, if they had fallen on times of quite a different complexion from their own, would still have left their mark upon their age, although it might have been made in quite a different manner. He had been educated by his father, who had served the State during a long life in many important capacities, as a merchant, because the sagacious father perceived that the times were rapidly becoming such in Florence as would be likely to offer but little inducement to any lover of liberty to take a share in the conduct of the government. And the house of Capponi had always been lovers of liberty, and as such opponents from the beginning to the power of the Medici. So Pietro became

a merchant; and throwing himself with all the native energy of his character into commercial pursuits and aims, throve so prosperously as to have drawn upon himself the "sour grapes" criticism of his contemporaries in accusations of a too eager pursuit of wealth. Lorenzo de' Medici, however, judged differently. That shrewd ruler, who especially piqued himself on his discriminating knowledge of men, thought that he saw in the rising merchant talents that might be turned to account in another direction. Capponi was then about thirty years of age. He had already acquired riches; and notwithstanding the old antagonism between his family and that of the Medici, he did not refuse to undertake a variety of missions confided to him by Lorenzo, whose foreign policy was for the most part such as an enlightened Florentine patriot might very conscientiously support. In this new career Capponi distinguished himself still more remarkably than he had done in his original calling. But he was yet to show that there were also other valuable capabilities in that vigorous and richly-endowed organization. It so happened that he was Commissioner for the Republic in the camp of Alfonso of Aragon, when that prince was engaged in defending the Duke of Ferrara against the Pope and the Venetians. The Neapolitan army had been worsted by the Papal troops, and Alfonso had so far lost his presence of mind as to be wholly incapable of rallying his army and saving himself from a total defeat. In this conjuncture the Florentine Commissioner, whose proper functions in the camp were of a purely civil character, seeing at a glance the state of the case, and what was needed, put himself at the head of the discouraged troops, led them once more against the enemy, and restored the fortune of the day. Thenceforward Capponi knew that his true vocation was that of a military commander rather than either a merchant or a diplomatist; and Florence knew that she possessed one

A.D. 1494.

A.D. 1494. citizen at least who could at need serve her in the field as efficaciously as in the cabinet. But the insatiable love of energetic action which was the especial characteristic of Capponi's temperament, was always urging him to unite, as Professor Villari remarks, the functions of a soldier to those of a commander;—a fault which was eventually the cause of his death.*

As long as Lorenzo lived, Capponi found himself able to serve the State under his rule, though he would doubtless have preferred a very different state of things in Florence. But matters changed sadly for the worse when Pietro succeeded to his father's power, and a fatally dangerous and humiliating foreign policy was added to the loss of domestic liberty. When so many of the old and traditional adherents and friends of the Medici were alienated from them by the conduct and character of Pietro, it was not likely that such a man as Pietro Capponi could continue to support him. He declared at once for the popular party and the restoration of popular institutions. And in that critical time of confusion and danger, when after the departure of Pietro de' Medici, the old government was suddenly destroyed, and when the Commonwealth found itself in the greatest peril, dismembered of its territory, and with an almost avowedly hostile army within the gates, while no new government could yet be regularly constituted, Pietro Capponi was very pre-eminently the one man on whose shoulders fell the duty of guiding and governing the city. He was, says Professor Villari, as much the right arm of the State as Savonarola was its brain;—a metaphor, however, which seems scarcely to do justice to Capponi, inasmuch as most assuredly the brain had its full share in the part which Capponi was called on

* Villari, Vita di Sav. v. i., p. 218.—Vita di Pietro di Gino Capponi, scritta de Vincenzo Acciaioli. Printed in the second part of the fourth volume of the Archivio Storico Italiano, Firenze, 1853, page 13.

to sustain during those days of trouble and utmost difficulty. A.D. 1494.

It was a matter of course that he should be named one of the four commissioners appointed to conduct the extremely thorny and perilous negotiations with the French king, on which the fate of the city depended. He was especially well calculated for the duty by circumstances, as well as by his own personal qualifications. For he knew Charles and the French Court well. He had been on several occasions ambassador from Florence to the court of France, and was on friendly terms with the French king.

The first opening of the question, on which it was of such vital importance that the city and the king should clearly understand each other,—the nature of the pretensions of the latter, and the position in which the city was to stand towards him,—was not encouraging. Charles at the outset attempted to assume the position of a conqueror, who is to grant to a conquered people such terms as may seem good to him. The indignation with which such a pretension was received, both by the commissioners and by the entire city, as soon as the news of this insolent assumption had been spread among the citizens, was extreme. And there was danger of a sudden outburst of the popular fury.

But Charles explained that his view of the matter must be correct; inasmuch as he had ridden into the city with his lance erect on his thigh!—which, according to all the rules understood in France to regulate such matters, implied that he entered Florence as a conqueror. Moreover, if any further proof of the correctness of this view were needed, it was to be found in the fact, that the officials of his army entrusted with the task of arranging the lodgings for the troops, had freely entered the city "with chalk in their hands" and had proceeded unimpeded to mark the doors of the houses!

A.D. 1494. The Florentines in the midst of their indignation and amazement, were almost amused at the absurd audacity of such an attempt to cheat them out of the possession of their own city by a lawyer's quibble. They admitted the facts of the lance borne upright on his Majesty's thigh,—doubtless not without a liberal expenditure of Florentine wit, anent the not alarmingly formidable nature of the weapon which could be so supported by that diminutive limb,—and of the chalk brought into the city by his Majesty's soldiers. But they altogether demurred to considering themselves conquered thus symbolically. They declared that they did not understand these visible signs to imply any such meaning; and utterly scouted the king's pretensions.

Some attempt at overtures made by him towards the restoration of the Medici, was still more fiercely resented by the popular feeling; and it was made abundantly evident to the Frenchman, that in whatever manner the relationship between France and the Florentine Commonwealth might be ultimately arranged, the citizens were prepared for any extremity rather than submit to the re-imposition of the hated yoke from which they had so recently freed themselves. Then the king began to talk of money payments. And on that ground the Florentines were less averse to meet him, and see whether they could not come to terms. There was nothing new to the citizens in that. It was the destiny of Florence always to pay, let who might have been those engaged in the dance. She was as much accustomed to being fleeced as a sheep who is shorn every year, and whose rich coat grows again as often. It would have been strange indeed, and something quite contrary to all Florentine memories and traditions, if a royal visitor had come to Florence and gone away again without carrying a goodly sum of Florentine gold with him. And Florence was of old accustomed to

think little of disbursing sums, which would seem very large to French penury. A.D. 1494.

So the negotiations were resumed on this footing. And the Commissioners, after some debate, presented to the King a document containing the propositions which the city offered. They did not appear acceptable to his Majesty and his advisers; who thereupon in their turn handed to the Commissioners a paper containing the King's ultimatum.

And then it was, that that memorable scene occurred, which historians, poets, dramatists, and painters have vied with each other in commemorating, and those noble words were pronounced, which the sympathy of every liberty-loving heart in all subsequent ages and in all countries has rendered immortal. The ultimatum of the King was found to contain not only demands which the Commissioners deemed exaggerated, but terms and phrases which they felt to be insulting to the dignity of Florence.* And when they essayed to remonstrate, Charles attempting to carry the matter with a high hand, and hoping to intimidate these unarmed citizens, replied angrily that, if his terms were not accepted he should order his trumpets to sound. Such an insolent menace was more than the civic pride of Pietro Capponi could tolerate. Scarcely had the offensive words left the King's lips, before, starting forwards with his eye on fire and with a quivering lip, he tore from top to bottom the proposed conditions, and cried, "Let your trumpets sound, if you will. And we will ring our bells!"

It was to the master of some twelve thousand or more armed men, then quartered within the city defended mainly by citizens for the most part unarmed, and deemed to have long since lost the manhood necessary for their

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 118.

A.D. 1494. own defence, that these hardy words were spoken! It was nobly and boldly done in any case; and the result proved that it was not mere reckless rashness. For a minute or two the whole assembly was struck dumb with astonishment, and Capponi, who had turned to leave the apartment, had already reached the door, when the King hastened to repair a breach, the consequences of which he did not care to face. Already the French had had an opportunity of seeing what the ringing of these bells meant in Florence. They had been so strongly impressed by what they then saw, that, as Nardi tells us, they had taken the greatest possible precautions to prevent the ringing of bells in Florence since that day, not being aware doubtless that it was one especial bell that had the power of thus in a moment causing the city to swarm with foemen. To them the ringing of the bells of Florence, was a very portentous threat, which might well be followed by a fatal disaster to the army.

Charles therefore called after Capponi, as he was on the point of quitting the room, and thought it wisest to take the matter jestingly. "Ah Capon! Capon!" he said with a laugh, "you are but a wicked Capon!" *

But he withdrew the offensive terms, and the articles of agreement were at last pacifically settled. The gist of them, as compendiously given by Guicciardini,† was as follows: An alliance offensive and defensive was to exist between the two peoples. Florence was to pay Charles an hundred and twenty thousand ducats in gold, fifty thousand down before he left the city, and the remaining

* Macchiavelli also, in one of his "Decennali," has a similar play on words in speaking of this act of Capponi:

"Lo strepito dell' armi e de' cavalli
Non potè far che non fosse sentita
La voce d'un *Cappon* fra cento *Galli*."

† Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 119.

seventy at short date. Lastly, the French king was to retain Pisa, Leghorn, Pietrasanta, and Sarzana,—the citadels, that is to say, not the entire cities,—until the end of the war with Naples, when they were to be restored to the Florentines. A.D. 1494.

The articles of the text of the convention are twenty-seven in number, and provide for a variety of matters of minor interest. But the above three points comprise the important objects of the instrument.* The reader however who will take the trouble to refer to the original text, will be not a little surprised at some of the language he will find there, when considered in conjunction with the facts that he has been reading in the preceding pages. Considering the past conduct of Charles, and his position in Florence, and the feelings towards him, which have been represented in the foregoing pages as animating the Florentines, it is certainly strange to find him entitled "the restorer of Florentine liberty, and father of the country." When all that the citizens *did* is borne in mind, it seems not a little extraordinary to hear them *saying* that "the King pardons his people of Florence all the faults they have committed, even as God, whose images kings are, pardons men their sins!" But this sort of language merely represents the theoretical reverence in which the royal authority was held in Florence, as well as in the rest of the European world, at that day; and is curious mainly as showing how much practical independence could be conjoined with so apparently servile a theory of the claims of authority.†

* The entire text of the convention, which is interesting in many respects, will be found in an appendix at the end of this volume, printed from the 1st vol. of the Archivio Storico Italiano.

† See some excellent remarks on this subject in a treatise by the present Marchese Gino Capponi, subjoined by him to the text of the treaty in question, where it is printed in the first volume of the Archivio Storico Italiano.

A.D. 1494. At length the draft of the treaty was agreed to by both sides, and was solemnly sworn to be faithfully observed by the contracting parties in the cathedral on the 25th of November; the fifty thousand ducats were paid down as stipulated, and two days afterwards the King left Florence on his way to Rome.*

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. chap. xii.; Nardi, Istorie di Firenze, lib. i. ad ann. 1494; Vita di Piero Capponi, in vol. iv. of the Archivio Storico Italiano; Giovanni Cambi, Istorie, vol. xxi., delle Delizia degli Eruditi Toscani: Villari, Vita di Savonarola, lib. ii. chap. iii.

CHAPTER II.

The Florentines, eager for the departure of Charles, send Savonarola to him —The French in leaving Florence steal all they can lay their hands on— A new government to be constituted—Difficulties in the way of doing so —Death of Poliziano—His character—Death of Pico della Mirandola— Leading men on whom the care of reconstructing the government fell— Sermon of Savonarola before them—Nardi's opinion of the Friar—Difficulty in withstanding the will of Savonarola—Proposal of the Signoria to the people—Twenty "Accoppiatori" appointed—Execution of Antonio di Bernardo—Other victims saved from the popular fury by Savonarola—Dissensions among the "Accoppiatori" render them powerless—No political leaders in Florence—Savonarola the only man who could rule the people—Circumstances which unfitted him for that task—Unfitness of all priests for meddling with civil government— Agitation in Florence—Prevailing notion of the expediency of imitating the Venetian constitution—Why not feasible—Arguments for and against the creation of a Great Council—Venetian "gentlemen," and Florentine "citizens"—Qualifications for admission to the Great Council—Savonarola begins to preach on the political questions of the time—Merit of the constitution elaborated by Savonarola in these sermons—Constitution of the Great Council—Construction of the Sala di Cinque Cento—Election of a Senate of Eighty—The Great Council had no legislative initiative—The "Accoppiatori" resign their offices.

CHARLES left Florence, as has been said, on the 28th of November, 1494; but his departure did not follow the signature of the treaty, and the payment of the fifty thousand ducats, with sufficient rapidity to satisfy the impatience of the Florentines. To a variety of hints, as broad as was consistent with a decent maintenance of the appearance of civility, the King seemed inclined to pay very little attention. He was housed more splendidly than he had ever been before, and was in no hurry during those November days to leave such luxurious quarters for the

A.D. 1494. purpose of pursuing the path of destiny across the wintry Apennine. It may be remarked, however, that we do not hear anything of his delay having been in any degree caused by seductions of the kind which had held him spell-bound at Lyons and at Asti. It does not appear that any such courtier-like facility on the part of the Florentine ladies tempted him, as had on the part of their French and Lombard sisters been so fatal to his progress. Florence was very nearly unanimous in loathing the presence of the monarch and his army within her walls; and very little intercourse of any friendly kind seems to have taken place between the citizens and the French, either of the court or the army.

Finding that the King did not seem to be thinking of starting on his southward journey, the Signory determined on sending Savonarola to him; and "the prophet" did not wait to be asked twice to undertake the mission. Presenting himself simply at the palace gate, he made his way, not without some difficulty, athwart the crowd of guards and soldiers to the King's presence; and there, without preamble or greeting, but with that curt and direct simplicity which might be supposed to become the bearer of a message from some higher authority than that of any one present, he said: "Most Christian Prince,* Thy delay here is causing serious mischief to the city, and to the enterprise in which thou art engaged. Thou art losing thy time, forgetful of the task which Providence has imposed on thee, to the grave detriment both of thy spiritual welfare and of thy worldly glory. Listen then now to the words of the servant of God. Go on thy way

* "Most Christian," it must be remembered, was the style and title of the French king, as much as "Defender of the Faith" was that of the English monarch at a little later date, and "Most Catholic" that of the King of Spain. It was so commonly used simply as a distinctive appellation, that the Italian historians frequently write "Il Cristianissimo," without further adjunct, when speaking of the King of France.

without further delay. Take care thou dost not bring ruin on this city, and the anger of the Lord on thyself." A.D. 1494.

Charles yielded to the ascendancy, which the high intellect and genuine faith of the Dominican monk had enabled him to acquire over the puny weakness and grovelling ignorance of the French sovereign, and departed, to the great joy of all Florence;—to the great joy of the city thus rid of its royal guest, but not without leaving behind him sentiments of strong disgust and contempt on the part of the citizens. For Frenchmen in the fifteenth were very much the same as they were in the eighteenth century. Whether coming in the guise of friends or of enemies, they were equally thieves and plunderers. The splendid palace, in which the King and his court had been lodged so generously, and with such confiding good faith, by the Florentines, was robbed by them on their departure in the most shameless manner. Not only the soldiers, and their officers, and the courtiers, laid hands on every precious thing they could see, but even the King of France himself did not scorn to become a thief under circumstances which would have shamed many a robber into temporary honesty. The most precious part of the booty fell to the royal share; and the King is recorded to have carried off among other articles of great value, the figure of a unicorn, which De Comines estimated to be worth seven thousand ducats. Among other objects stolen, De Comines speaks of several beautiful cups of agate, and a greater number of cameos wonderfully cut, than he (De Comines) had ever seen before;—as well as three thousand or more fine medals in gold and silver, weighing at least forty pounds;—"such a quantity as I should not have thought existed in all Italy." *

The Frenchmen were gone; the imminent danger was

* De Comines, lib. vii. chap. ii. p. 50, vol. xiii.; Du Coll. Petitot; Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. i. p. 224.

A.D. 1494. past; and Florence felt as if a mountain had been removed from off her heart. The Medici had also been got rid of. The tyranny which seemed to have struck its roots so deeply that there was small hope that Florence would ever be able to emancipate herself from it, had suddenly collapsed; and the city was once again its own mistress, with full power to arrange its own affairs and make its own destinies. Nevertheless, the state of things was very far from reassuring or easy. Two matters pressed themselves more immediately on the attention of the citizens; in the first place, the necessity of constructing a form of government in the place of that which the flight of the Medici had caused to collapse in complete confusion; and in the second place, the recovery of Pisa. There was not a man in Florence of whatever rank and position who did not feel that the credit and honour of the city absolutely required the re-acquisition of the sovereignty of Pisa. There was not a man among them, who so loved liberty, as not to be desirous of destroying the liberty of a neighbouring city, and becoming the despot towards others, whose power he so much hated when wielded against himself.

The first pressing need was to constitute a government. The sudden departure of Pietro de' Medici had not only destroyed the past government in its outward form, but had in a great measure deprived the city of any available materials for its re-construction. The Medicean domination had lasted too long,—now sixty years,—for any of the old avowed opponents of that family to be any longer found in the city. All such had been destroyed or scattered by death and proscription, or converted by the apparent hopelessness of opposition, and the influence of successful power, into more or less genuine partisans of the Medicean ascendancy;—as we have seen was the case even with such a man as Pietro Capponi. And to a certain degree this state of things was favourable to the peaceful passage of the

city through its state of transition. For as all had, more or less heartily, concurred in submitting to the Medicean power while it had lasted, and all were more or less genuinely glad that it had come to an end, there was as yet none of that bitter and implacable party hatred, which had usually made revolutions in Florence a struggle for life and death between hostile factions. As yet, I say; for Florence would not have been Florence if, in a state of freedom, party spirit and party hatred had not ere long developed themselves. A.D. 1494.

Death also had been busy in these same months, removing, not inopportunely perhaps, some of the more prominent and most intimate of the friends of the exiled family. Angelo Poliziano had died on the 24th of September in that same year, "loaded," says a contemporary writer,* whose unpublished history of his times is quoted by Professor Villari, "with as much infamy and public vituperation as a man could well endure." His life had not been an exemplary one; nor had the splendid talents with which he was endowed been well applied, except in so far as his great erudition contributed to the development of the then new and rising taste for classical studies.

And that even this was a very doubtful benefit to Italy, will scarcely fail to suggest itself to those who compare the Italian, especially the Tuscan, literature of the previous with that of the subsequent age. The northern nations had too vigorous a life, and too strongly and diversely characterized a mental constitution, to be swamped and paganized by the revival of the ancient learning. But it was otherwise in Italy. The homogeneity of the modern Italian and the old Latin mind was such, that coming as it did at a time when, from political circumstances, the vigour of the national life was waning, the old learning took such entire possession of the Italian intellect, that

* Porenti, Storia Fiorentina, MS. in the Magliabecchian Library.

A.D. 1494. the vigorous and promising growth of genuinely Italian literature was swamped, the national taste emasculated, and a servilely imitative literature produced, which degenerated with fatal rapidity into ever more and more entirely empty wordiness.

The loud accusations of Poliziano's contemporaries, however, were more especially directed against his moral character, which unfortunately was but too open to such attacks; while the real cause of the odium which prompted these attacks was his close and intimate connection with the Medici.

Angelo Poliziano, however, prudently "repented" on his death-bed, and made an edifying end. The sincerity of his repentance was indubitable; for, as he had found the means of making this life pleasant by wearing the livery of those who had power in their hands, so in death he determined to present himself to the summoning angel in the garb of a devoted adherent of the Master in the future sphere on which he was about to enter. With this view he caused himself to be interred in the robes of a Dominican monk, a somewhat unfairly crafty proceeding which was very much in vogue with dying sinners at that day. It is worthy of notice also, that bitterly opposed in life as he must have been to the Friar who was the most uncompromising and most dangerous of the enemies of the Medici, it was the Dominican habit, in preference to that of any other order, which he selected as his badge of partisanship in the next world, and the convent of St. Mark the place in which he chose to be buried; thus making it clear that if he had considered that of the Medici to be the winning side in this life, he was none the less convinced that Savonarola's would be found the better protection in the other.*

About the same time died his younger friend, brother

* He was buried, according to his wish, in the church of St. Mark, where the following quaint epitaph may yet be read:—

scholar, and fellow adherent of the Medici, Pico della Mirandola. His life was a short one (thirty-two years only), and there is no evidence that it was in any way one specially needing such a strong corrective measure as that adopted by his friend. Pico, however, was also desirous of being mistaken for a Dominican monk in the day when the graves should give up their dead. But Death called him so hastily that he was unable to do more than express to Savonarola his desire to be buried in that holy garb. He had more right to it than Politian, for his intimacy with Lorenzo de' Medici had not prevented him from being the friend of Savonarola. Nevertheless the latter had grave doubts, we are told, about the propriety of complying with his dying friend's request, on the ground that Pico had manifested an intention of joining the order, but had put off doing so,—being thus guilty of an attempt to resist the operation of grace. And it was not till enlightened by a special vision on the subject that Savonarola found himself able to accord the desired privilege. It was, however, at last granted; and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola lies buried in St. Mark's Church by the side of Angelo Poliziano. A.D. 1494.

Amid this confusion and paucity of men fitted by their intelligence or social position to place themselves at the helm of the State, the task of taking the first steps towards re-organizing the government fell on Piero Capponi, Tanai de' Nerli, Francesco Valori, Lorenzo di Pier-Francesco de' Medici,* and Bernardo Rucellai. While these citizens

POLITIANUS
IN HOC TUMULO JACET
ANGELUS UNUM
QUI CAPUT ET LINGUAS
RES NOVA TRES HABUIT.

Of course, the allusion is to his linguistic attainments.

* One of those distant cousins of the late tyrant, whose enmity to him has been mentioned.

A.D. 1494. were deliberating on the necessary steps to be taken, Savonarola intimated his desire to preach to them on the subject of the forthcoming form of government. The offer was at once accepted, and the Friar pronounced a discourse "without the presence of the women and children, who to very little purpose are in the habit of occupying the places which should be filled by more understanding auditors." *

The Friar's discourse, besides exhortations to general reformation and a severer mode of life, insisted mainly on the necessity of a general amnesty, on a cordial union between the citizens of all classes and parties, and above all on a restoration of the popular government on the largest possible basis. "It was supposed at that time," says Jacopo Nardi, himself a thorough-going Republican, and writing when exiled by the restored Medici for his political creed, "that that man (Savonarola) understood but little of active practical life, and could only discourse of general morality and Christian philosophy. But if his doctrine had been listened to, he would assuredly have disposed the minds of our citizens to receive a truly good and holy form of government." †

But the knot of men into whose hands the shaping of the new government had fallen were aristocratic whigs, not radicals. And they shrank, perhaps wisely, from trusting the fortunes of the city to the thorough-going democratic constitution, which the Friar in his enthusiasm for freedom, and—it is perhaps fair to add—in his consciousness of having himself the power of controlling the masses, would have fain seen established.

It was not, however, an easy or a safe course at that time, and under the existing circumstances, to act in direct opposition to the advice of the Friar. His influence over

* Jacopo Nardi, vol. i. p. 58, ed. cit.
† Nardi, ed. cit., vol. i. p. 60.

the masses was now at its culminating point. The popular imagination had been very forcibly impressed by the speedy fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the death of Lorenzo, the late Pope, and the late King of Naples. It had been further excited by the success of Savonarola in sending the King of France out of the city, when the efforts of the first citizens in the Commonwealth had failed to attain the object. These successes, together with that denunciatory strain of eloquence which is so well fitted to move the mind of the masses in times of danger and trouble, gave Savonarola a power in Florence which it would not have been wise to defy. A.D. 1494.

The governing junta, therefore, chose a middle and temporizing course. Having determined on the proposals they would make to the people, they proceeded according to immemorial Florentine usage in times of revolution and constitutional change, summoned the people into the Piazza by the sound of the bell, and descended to the "ringhiera,"—the *haranguing* place in front of the palace gates—to lay before the citizens their proposals. The populace, ever ready to be fooled by the presentation before it of a shadow instead of a reality,—especially ready as every populace always is to be so cheated, when itself has a share in the presentation of the cheat,—rushed rejoicingly into the Piazza, proud of the recovery of its old liberties. Here, indeed, were the grand old times come back again. The grandsires told how they could remember such doings in the fine old days when they were lads, and had taken part in the banishment of Cosmo, who was afterwards discovered by them to be the "Father of his country." Every man, as he hurried to the Piazza, felt that he was a free citizen taking his part in the government of his "Commune." Florence was herself again. That this proud part which they were called on to play limited itself to the shouting of "Yes! yes!" in the right

A.D. 1494. place,—that the alternation of shouting "No! no!" instead, let the propositions made to them be what they might, was by no means open to them, or could be indulged in only at the cost of bringing their parliament with extreme rapidity to a despotic ending, if not of immediate falling to debate by way of dagger, knife and cutlass, and civil war,—this did not occur to them. They thronged to the Piazza with their "Ay! ay!" ready in their throats, and each man felt himself every inch a freeman.

The junta within the *ringhiera* told them that they purposed returning to the ancient practice of the best times of the Republic, when all the offices and all the magistracies were filled by drawing the holders of them from purses containing the names of all the citizens.

Then, as we may well imagine, a shout went up that made the old Piazza ring again! This indeed was true liberty! If by the nature of things, unhappily, it was impossible for every man to be ruler at the same time, here was the next best thing;—that every man should have a ticket in the lottery, where shares in the pleasure of ruling were the prizes! As for the questions, "*How* am I to be governed?"—"What is to be the limit of the authority over me of him who is to govern me?"—such considerations were of far too humble a nature for free citizens, who aspired, every man of them, to be themselves the wielders of the authority and the power.

But when the shouting over this glorious prospect of government by lottery had ceased, a voice from the *ringhiera* spake again.

Yes, the old practice of the Republic in its best day must be restored. But under the peculiar and perilous circumstances in which the city was placed, that desirable consummation could not be reached immediately. The present Signory, therefore, proposed to defer this blessing for the space of one year. They demanded that, during

that brief period, the different offices, legislative and administrative, should be appointed by twenty "Accoppiatori" named for this purpose, and that these "Accoppiatori" should, as a matter of course, be named by themselves, the present Signory. They proposed, in short, a popular government on the widest possible basis *for the future*, and a close oligarchical despotism meanwhile for the present. A.D. 1494.

But the independent citizens shouted "Ay! ay!" with undiminished enthusiasm, and returned to their homes with the consciousness of being freemen and patriots.

The only restriction on the selection of the twenty "Accoppiatori" was that nineteen of them must be forty years of age. The provision thus curiously framed was intended to legitimize the nomination of Lorenzo di Pier-Francesco de' Medici, who was under that age.

Guicciardini * gives the names of eighteen of these all-important "Accoppiatori" to whom the absolute government of the city was thus entrusted, leaving a blank for the other two, whose names he had apparently forgotten at the moment of writing. Among them we find a Ridolfi, a de' Nerli, a Capponi (Piero), a Corsi, a Giugni, a Salviati, a Rucellai, a Pazzi, a Martelli, Francesco Valori, and Lorenzo di Pier-Francesco de' Medici;—all names which remained prominent in Tuscan history for ages afterwards, and some of which are so still.

A "Dieci di Guerra" were named for the active prosecution of the war against Pisa, which had now once more to be undertaken, as if in order that nothing might be wanting to complete the illusion of the old times in Florence having indeed returned again. The nomination of the "Otto di Balia," for the management of the daily police duties of the city, had also to be attended to at

* Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 119.

A.D. 1494. once; and "Guido Mannelli, Andrea Strozzi, and others were chosen, who spent so much money in banquets to celebrate their entrance on office that they were thenceforward publicly known as the *Wassailing Eight.*"*

"And when these magistrates had been created," the historian continues, "Antonio di Bernardo was hung at the windows of the Bargello to content the people." The unfortunate man whose murder is thus coolly recorded had been the manager of the exchequer and public debt under Pietro de' Medici; and though he was, we are told, a prudent and discreet officer, with a more perfect knowledge of the affairs of his own department than any other man in the city, and honest withal in the management of it, yet the odiousness of his office, and the rudeness of his manners, *joined to the fact of his not belonging to any Florentine noble family*, had made him so hateful to the people that they could not be satisfied without his blood. We find no word of any pretence of a trial. The victim of popular hatred is put to death to celebrate the restoration of "liberty!"

It was intended also to gratify the popular hatred with another victim,—a certain Ser Giovanni delle Riformagioni, —who would assuredly have been sacrificed if it had not been for the opposition of Savonarola, who kept crying from the pulpit that it was a time for mercy and not for *justice.*

There were also many men of higher note in the city, known as friends of the Medici, whom a large party in Florence would fain have struck down; such as Bernardo del Nero, Niccolò Ridolfi, Jacopo Salviati, and others. But those who had the present government in their hands were anxious, both on public and private grounds, to repress these enmities and excesses. Not only would the city have been laid waste, as Guicciardini expresses it, if

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 119.

this cry for blood had been allowed to prevail, but the present men felt that they had themselves been once upon a time more or less adherents of the Medici; and that if they suffered all the main supporters of the old government to be mown down, they would be left face to face with the descendants of those men who had been the victims of the Medicean proscription, and who were still the mortal enemies of all who had at any time formed the Medicean party. They did all in their power, therefore, to moderate the bitterness of party feeling, taking care in the choice of the "Accoppiatori," and in filling up the other offices, to mix with the names of their own more immediate friends a sprinkling of the men of other parties. Nevertheless, says Guicciardini, they would hardly have succeeded in stemming the tide of the popular vengeance, had they not been assisted in their efforts to do so by Savonarola;—assisted contrary to their expectation, as Guicciardini tells us,* for they did not expect that so thorough-going an enemy to the past government, and partisan of democracy, would have used his power with the people in their favour. A.D. 1494.

And so far the extraordinary authority which the Dominican friar had acquired over the popular mind was all that could be desired. But before long his earnest democratic republicanism became not a little inconvenient to those who had the task and the responsibility of actually carrying on the government. It was in any case no easy work to do so. The twenty "Accoppiatori," though they had absolute power in their hands to fill all the offices of the government at their pleasure, nevertheless found themselves unable to get on with their work. In the first place, their own dissensions among themselves made it impossible for them to fill the offices according to the re-

* Storia Fiorentina, opere inedite, vol. iii. p. 119.

A.D. 1495. quirements of the law. At the very outset, in the case of the first and most important election they were called upon to make,—that to the high office of Gonfaloniere,—they found themselves unable to agree together so far as to unite more than three votes on any one name. The result was that they were compelled, not without very great injury to their own credit and influence, to resolve illegally that the candidate who obtained the greatest number of suffrages, howsoever few they might be, should be considered elected, instead of insisting on the agreement of an absolute majority of the electors.*

It was possible enough, as Professor Villari well remarks, that this system of nominating to the offices by "Accoppiatori" should work smoothly and regularly as long as they themselves were appointed, in reality if not avowedly, by some great and leading citizen, whether an Albizzi or a Medici, and all they had to do was to choose the men of his party who were most agreeable to him. And thus it had been in all the former cases since this method had been first adopted. But now, when the "Accoppiatori" had been selected by a mixed body thrown together by the accidents incidental to the moments of confusion following Pietro's flight, rather than chosen with any view to homogeneity of party,—when, further, that body had not been able to consult even such amount of unity of sentiment as existed among them, but had felt themselves obliged, on the contrary, to admit among the "Accoppiatori" men representing the most diametrically opposed views, the governmental machine of which this body of "Accoppiatori" was the mainspring would not work at all.

Nor does there seem to have been any man whose talents and position were such as to enable him to assume

* Nardi, Storie di Firenze, ad an. lib. i.; Villari, Vita di Sav. vol. i. p. 232.

such an authority as was sorely needed for the governance of the rudderless ship of the State. Francesco Valori was a man of energy and of a certain rude ability;—a man of the stuff of which successful demagogues are made;—but he was not, nor had the capacity to become, a statesman. Even Pietro Capponi was not adapted for the patient and baffling work of the council chamber. He was essentially a man of action;—a man to cut short debate by such a word as that which, spoken to the King of France, has immortalized his name; but not one to conduct a thorny debate to a successful issue, or to obtain that mastery in the political arena which he had shown himself so capable of seizing on the battle-field.* A.D. 1495.

There was but one man indeed in Florence who had a veritable kingship over men by real right divine. And that was the Dominican friar Savonarola,—"*Il frate*," as he was called by all the city in those days. This friar had the heaven-born gift of ruling and guiding the minds of men. He alone in those days could move the popular mind, direct it at his pleasure, and compel conflicting interests and selfishnesses to forget themselves, and unite in effort for the public weal.

But Savonarola was a monk. Notwithstanding the opinion of that stout old republican Nardi, that if men would only have listened to Savonarola, he would have shown them the way to a good and rational form of government, it can hardly be denied that those who thought, as honest Jacopo tells us, that the Friar knew nothing of civil government, had sufficiently strong ground for their opinion. Savonarola *was* listened to. Few men have ever been listened to by their contemporaries with results indicating so implicit an obedience to their authority. But when the mode in which he exerted his influence

* Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. i. p. 235.

A.D. 1495. shall have been examined, few readers of the present day probably will be inclined to think that "the Friar" had that knowledge of mankind and of the possibilities of human nature which alone could have enabled him to guide Florence through its troubles to a good issue.

As far as we have yet gone, the powerful influence which Savonarola had acquired over the Florentines (mainly due as it was, and as it is humiliating to confess, to the simple accident of three prominent personages having died in accordance with his very natural prevision that they would soon do so) had been used to good purpose. He had saved the city from being deluged with blood after the flight of Pietro, and from thus storing up a fresh batch of hatreds and revenges for the sure reproduction of new troubles and disasters in the future. He had rendered hopeless all schemes for the seizing of supreme power by any of those whose position might have tempted them to appropriate that which they had helped to wrench from the Medici. Though ignorant in common with his contemporaries of the nature and fundamental principles of civil liberty, and of the means by which alone it can be secured to societies of men, he had yet in his own breast, and he inspired in the hearts of the multitude, that hatred of tyranny, and that respect for the dignity of manhood and equal rights, which might under more favourable circumstances have produced the fruits he was blindly groping for.

But his priestly character incapacitated him for guiding the Florentines to the foundation of any practicable system of free government, yet more fatally than his lay contemporaries were incapacitated. As in them, his theories of liberty were falsified by the influence of ideas deposited in every mind of Latin race by the ancient municipal system so ineradicably and deeply as to be beyond the sounding of self-consciousness. The intensity with which this system

produced and fostered the sense of, and a love for, communal rights and franchises, excluded all due care for individual liberty. But besides this inaptitude, which he shared with all his contemporaries, Savonarola was strongly characterized by that special priestly incapacity which in all places and in all times renders mischievous every attempt on the part of priests of whatever creed to meddle with the civil government of mankind;—the incapacity for distinguishing between sin and crime; or at least of distinguishing between them to such purpose as to keep clearly before their minds all the laws and principles that flow from the distinction. Occupied with all the powers of his mind and soul in a life-long battle against sin, it is perhaps impossible for a zealous priest to conceive—at least to any practical purpose—that the civil magistrate can take no part with him in any such crusade. When armed with civil power himself, it is wholly impossible to him to refrain from attempting to use it for purposes which he has most deeply at heart, and which he deems most fundamentally necessary for the best interests of those whom he is called upon to govern. A.D. 1495.

The more earnest, the more whole-hearted a priest is in his own proper work, the more incapable will he be of working to any good purpose as a civil ruler; and the more intolerable will it be to him to admit the fundamental under-lying reason, which makes it impossible for the civil magistrate of a free community to attempt the repression of sin as distinguished from crime or misdemeanor;—namely, the absence of all warrant authorizing him in his character of magistrate to declare what is sin, and what is not.

The Friar of St. Mark's was an earnest and whole-hearted priest, eager, if ever man was eager, in the fight against evil of every kind. And the result was, that he so used the political power which his own ability and the

A.D. 1495. circumstances of the times had placed in his hands, as eventually to frustrate his own objects entirely, and to discredit the cause he had at heart.

Meanwhile, during those early months of the year 1495, all was doubt, confusion, and uncertainty at Florence. It began to be abundantly clear that the promise which had been made to the people in the "Parlamento" immediately after the flight of Pietro and the departure of the King, that the city should return to a popular form of government at an early day, would have to be kept in some way, at the end of the year, as had been promised, if not sooner. The agitation and discontent of the people left no hope that those who held the power in their hands temporarily might be able to keep it for the consolidation of an oligarchy. And even if there had been no pressure from without, the "Accoppiatori,"—"I Venti" as they were generally called,—in whose hands the whole power of the government was in fact centred at this time, were too much divided among themselves to make any united action or permanence of the present state of things possible. It was absolutely necessary to do something towards coming out from a condition which every man felt and admitted to be provisional, and attaining to some regularized form of constitution. But what was this something to be? "This was the constant subject of conversation in the "loggie," in the piazzas and the streets, and of the more serious and earnest debates in the council chamber, where the Twenty talked, and talked day after day, ... to little or no purpose. They often remained in interminable debate, we are told, till five or six hours after sunset.*

It was an idea prevailing widely at that time, that the Venetian government offered a model which Florence could

* Barlamacchi, Life of Savonarola, quoted by Professor Villari, Vita di Sav. vol. i. p. 210.

not do better than imitate in the re-organization of her constitution. In Venice alone, of all the states of Italy, no revolutions had happened to desolate the city with proscription and ruin; no popular outbreaks had endangered the lives and property of the citizens; and no tyrant had arisen to confiscate to his own profit the liberties of the Republic. Venice, among all the varied fortunes of the Italian cities, and the destruction of the liberties of most of them,—Venice alone remained always the same, stable, free, and prosperous. Let Florence, then, adopt a similar form of government, and she would reap from it similar fruit. A.D. 1495.

Professor Villari, in the excellent work which has been so often quoted in these pages, has some interesting remarks on this scheme of importing into Florence the Venetian constitution. He draws a parallel between ancient Venice and Florence on the one hand, and modern England and France on the other, showing that it was as impracticable for Florence to acquire the advantages she sought by borrowing Venetian institutions as it would be at the present day for France to find political stability by adopting the forms of the English constitution. And he further observes, that the mainly important element, which in either case existed and exists in the more stable body politic, and which it was and is in either case impossible for the more tempest-tossed State to import or imitate, was in Venice and is in England an ancient aristocracy.

This notion of borrowing the Venetian constitution was, however, at the time of which we are speaking, the favourite nostrum at Florence for the cure of the almost desperate political maladies of the Commonwealth; and Savonarola was among those who most warmly advocated it. The debates on the urgently pressing subject of the nature of the reform, which all admitted to be absolutely necessary, which occupied so late into the night the much-puzzled

A.D. 1495. and much-doubting "Twenty" in the council halls of the Palace, seem to have fallen mainly into the hands of two leading members of that body, both Doctors of law, who took different sides on the subject. These were Pagolo* Antonio Soderini, who represented the more popular and democratic views, and Guido Antonio Vespucci, who supported the opinions and claims of the aristocratic classes, or "Ottimati," as they began to be called. The speeches of both these statesmen have been preserved by Guicciardini, and given at great length in his general history, and they have been epitomized by Professor Villari.†

The great point of difference between the opponents was the adoption of the Venetian Grand Council. Soderini urged that the Twenty should at once resign; that a Greater Council should be established after the manner of that of Venice, into which all the citizens who possessed the franchise should enter; and a smaller Council or Senate, similar to the "Pregadi" of the Venetians, to be formed of the Ottimati, in which such business of the State should be transacted as was not fitted for public debate. Vespucci, in combating this proposal, spoke at large of all that Florence had suffered in past times from popular excess; asserted that the people of Venice were far more fit to be trusted with political power than the Florentines, by reason of their naturally greater prudence, gravity, and steadiness of character; and further pointed out, that notwithstanding this, the Great Council at Venice was not in fact composed of the people, but of gentlemen. To this latter observation it was replied, on the popular side, that a "gentleman" at Venice occupied the same social position as a "citizen" at Florence; inasmuch as it was not proposed that the populace should be admitted to the council.

* A popular Tuscan form of Paolo.

† Guicciardini, Storia d'Italia, libro ii. cap. i. vol. i. p. 238, ed. cit.; Villari, vol. i. p. 239.

And although the fundamentally different constitution of society at Venice placed a more distinct and strongly marked line between the gentleman and the plebeian, who was excluded from political rights, yet it was quite true that the restrictions which, at Florence, excluded all the lowest classes from "citizenship," properly so called, constituted those admitted to it a select and superior class. Even Savonarola only proposed that all those citizens should make part of the Great Council who were eligible to the three greater offices of the Republic, and whose fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers had been so before them;—a condition which alone would seem to confine the franchise to a tolerably close civic aristocracy; besides which, all were to be excluded who were not "*netti di specchio*,"—that is to say, whose names appeared on the "*specchio*," or register of such as were debtors to the State on account of their taxes. Further, no man was to be entitled to a seat in the council who had not completed his twenty-ninth year. A.D. 1495.

There was no doubt that the opinion supported by Soderini was that of the great majority of the city "out-of-doors;" but the more aristocratic theories of Vespucci found the greater support in the Palace. Yet it was impossible for those who hankered after such a constitution as might enable them to keep the power of the State in their own or their friends' hands, to hide from themselves the danger of baulking the people of their hopes in the present temper of the public mind. And Guicciardini does not hesitate to express his opinion that such an attempt would in all probability have led either to an outbreak of popular licence, or very possibly to a Medicean resorattion.

But while these protracted debates were being carried on in the Palace, with little apparent probability of any practical result, the matter was being taken in hand by a

A.D. 1495. more energetic and powerful counsellor. And the Florentine public, weary of uncertainty and suspense, and becoming every day less disposed to place confidence in those who had nominally the shaping of the city's destinies in their hands, were seeking guidance in another quarter. During all this time Savonarola had been preaching to crowded audiences in the Duomo, and acquiring from day to day a greater ascendancy over the public mind. But it was not till the end of the year,—not till it became clear that little useful guidance or available initiative was to be expected from the *Palazzo Pubblico*,—that his sermons began to be avowedly and directly political. Before that, though his discourse was continually occupied with the public affairs and prospects of the city, its unhappy condition, and manifold ill-doings, he had contemplated these things only generally and from a religious point of view, without recommending any remedy for the evils he deplored, save the more properly professional remedies of penitence, charity, and a godly life.

From that time forward his sermons, without losing their religious character,—for he continually insisted on the necessity of a great and general reform of life as an absolute *sine quâ non* for the establishment of a durable system of self-government,—became avowedly and practically political. Crowded around his pulpit, the people listened to disquisitions and plans of political organization, which gradually informed their minds with clear ideas of what it was that they wanted, and what was the social arrangement best adapted for the securing of it. And thus it was not in the Palace, but in the Duomo, that the new constitution of the Commonwealth was elaborated.

In order fully to appreciate the statesman-like qualities and ability of the Friar, and the influence which he exercised at this time on the fortunes of the Republic, it would be necessary, as Professor Villari says, "to follow step by

step the formation of the new constitution, and to read at the same time the sermons which he was preaching during that period from day to day. When we see," continues Professor Villari, "that all the new laws are preceded by one or more of Savonarola's sermons, in which they are proposed, counselled, and explained to the people, and when we follow the debates* of the Signoria in the Palace, and find the citizens there using the Friar's very language, adducing his arguments in his own words, to such an extent that it might be supposed that their speeches were mere repetitions of his sermons, then and then only are we made adequately aware of the degree in which this one man had become the informing soul of the whole people." A.D. 1495.

The eloquent and able biographer, and somewhat too enthusiastic admirer, of Savonarola goes on to say that an adequate judgment of his hero can be formed only when, having thoroughly examined the constitution thus elaborated, we find it "admirable in all its parts, magnificently grand in its entirety, and hear the voice of all the greatest Italian historians and statesmen unanimously asserting that it is not only the best, but the only good form of government that Florence ever had during her long and tumultuous history." It seems to me, however, that this is going a little too far. It is quite true that the greatest historians and statesmen of Italy regarded the Friar's political work as having been admirably adapted to the necessities of the time, and probably the means of saving Florence from anarchy and civil war. On this point the reader would do well to consult Guicciardini's Dialogue, "Del Reggimento di Firenze," in the second volume of the "Opere inedite," printed for the first time in 1858.*

* Which may still be done in the MS. journals of the proceedings preserved in the Florentine archives.

† The remarks made by Professor Villari on the difference between Guicciardini, as he appears in his well-known history, which was written

A.D. 1495. But surely a modern statesman can scarcely judge Savonarola's constitution to be excellent in all its parts and superb in its entirety, much as he may admire the sagacious boldness of the attempt to grapple with a problem which was in fact insoluble, and to construct a rope that should hold together a stable political edifice out of the sand, which was the only material offered by the disintegrated elements of the Florentine body social, as it then existed.

Such as it was, however, the new government formed for Florence under circumstances of such insuperable difficulty was the work of the preaching Friar of St. Mark's, and of no other. The rising tide of popular opinion overbore all resistance in the Palace, and the democratic constitution recommended by Savonarola, and willed by the people, became law.

The main feature of the new constitution was the Grand Council. It has already been shown that this was in reality far from consisting of the entire body of the citizens; though theoretically it was supposed to be so. It will be observed that no notion of *representation* entered into the idea of it at all. It was in theory intended not to *represent* but to *be* the entire body of the people. And all those restrictions, which rendered it in fact a select portion only of the people, were rooted in the old fundamental ideas with regard to the constituent qualities of "citizens" and "popolo," which descended from the days of ancient Rome; and which excluded a great part of the dwellers within the walls of a *municipium* from the idea of citizenship altogether. These were the notions that led to the assertion, noticed above, that a Florentine "citizen" in

for readers of his own day, and as he is seen in those recently published writings, which were not destined by him for publication, are exceedingly well worth reading. See the note at the end of the fifth chapter of the second book of his Life of Savonarola, vol. i. p. 285.

fact occupied a similar social position to that of a Venetian "gentleman." A.D. 1495.

So very far was the Grand Council, as established in accordance with Savonarola's views, from really including all the citizens of mature age, that whereas the population of Florence has been estimated to have amounted at this time to ninety thousand souls,* there were proved to be only three thousand two hundred persons duly qualified to sit in the assembly. The new law provided that when the numbers composing the Great Council should exceed 1,500, they should be divided into three parts, one of which should form the Council for a period of six months to be then succeeded in office by the other divisions, each for a similar term. Thus at the outset the Great Council consisted of little more than a thousand. But there was no hall in Florence large enough for the accommodation of such a meeting. So that magnificent chamber, afterwards adorned by Michael Angelo, Vasari, and others, and known at the present day as the Sala de' Cinque Cento, was ordered to be constructed under the superintendence of Simone del Pollaiuolo, surnamed Cronaca, over a building, which was used for the custom-house, immediately at the back of the main body of the *Palazzo Pubblico*. It was provided further, as an incitement to honourable ambition, that every three years sixty citizens should be elected to sit in the Council out of those who were not otherwise entitled to do so. And with a view to encouraging the rising generation to interest itself in public affairs, and prepare itself for the time when it should be called on to legislate for the Commonwealth, the law directed that twenty-four young men of twenty-four years old should similarly be elected every three years to sit among their elders.

The first duty of the Great Council thus constituted was

* Zuccagni-Orlandini, Statistica della Toscana.

A.D. 1495. to elect out of its own body a smaller council of eighty citizens, of forty years of age at least, who were to form a Senate, and to be renewed every six months. Their special duty was to assist the Signory with their advice; and the latter body were bound to confer with them at least once in every week.

It is important to observe, however, that neither the greater nor the smaller Council were entrusted with any initiative in legislation. Proposed laws were to originate with the Signory, the old legislative authority of the Commonwealth, which, though reduced to a mere empty form by the Medici, still existed, and with the constitution of which the new arrangement did not propose to meddle. But before acquiring the force of law they were to be first submitted to the Council of Eighty, and, having received the sanction of that body, were to be laid before the Great Council for ratification. This body could reject them by its vote, but could neither discuss nor modify them. Nor could the members of the more popular chamber speak at all, unless specially invited to do so by the Signory, and then never against but only in favour of the proposal under consideration.

Such was the system devised by Savonarola, and forced on the reluctant Signory by his paramount ascendancy over the public mind.

The early months of the year 1495 were consumed in getting the new constitution into working order; and on the 8th of June, "the Twenty" resigned their office.*

* Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, lib. ii. cap. i.; Storia Fiorentina, cap. xii.; Nardi, lib. ii. ad ann. 1495; Cambi, Istoria, ad ann. 1495, vol. xxi.; Del. degli Erud. Tosc.; Villari, Vita di Savonarola, lib. ii. cap. v.

CHAPTER III.

March of the French army through Italy—Entire success of the French arms—Triumphant entry of Charles into Naples—Conduct of the French at Naples—Charles leaves Naples—Reaches Rome—Charles at Siena—Feelings at Florence towards the French king—Savonarola visits Charles at Poggibonsi—Charles at Pisa—Leaves D'Entragues in command of the citadel—Negotiations with the French at Asti—Order for the restoration of Pisa sent to Tuscany—Disobeyed by D'Entragues—Who eventually gives up the citadel to the Pisans—Strong desire at Florence to reconquer Pisa—Pisans give themselves up to Milan and Venice—Ludovico of Milan persuades Venice to undertake the holding of Pisa alone—Florence refuses to join the league unless Pisa be restored to her—Why Savonarola was anxious for the French king to return to Italy—His prophecies—Fatal path entered on by Savonarola—Enmity excited by his preaching—Parties in Florence—"Piagnoni"—"Ottimati"—"Arrabiati"—Nature of the Friar's moral influence—Necessity for getting up some outward and visible sign of it—Carnival of 1496—The Friar's new way of keeping it—The burning of the "Vanities"—Nature of the objects burned—Estimated value of them—Spiritual songs for dancing—Compared with the songs of our own Puritans.

MEANWHILE King Charles had continued his march from Florence to Rome, and from Rome to Naples. Everywhere the allies of the King of Naples, who should have been united to defend their own states as well as those of their ally against the invader, abandoned him at the approach of the French. A panic terror seemed to have paralysed all Italy. In the few cases in which some little show of resistance was made, the unheard-of barbarity with which the French troops treated the easily overpowered garrisons, butchering in cold blood soldiers and peaceful inhabitants alike, spread a terror among the

A.D. 1495. Italians, wholly unaccustomed to such a mode of warfare, which was useful perhaps to the invading army for the time, but which stored up a terrible amount of hatred against the French name, the ill consequences of which France had afterwards to feel.

Alfonso of Naples, finding himself utterly abandoned by his allies, and his army turning in flight absolutely without striking a blow, at the very approach of the enemy, gave up all for lost, and, abdicating in favour of his son Ferdinand, fled to the town of Nazari, in Sicily, where he hid himself in a convent, and, passing the remainder of his days there in prayer and fasting, died on the 19th of February in that same year.

Ferdinand, a brave prince, beloved by his subjects, strove still to defend first one point and then another against the advancing tide of his enemies. But his troops still melted away at the bare approach of the French. Driven from one line of defence to another, without having been able even to fight a single battle with the enemy, he was at last compelled to abandon his capital, and retreat to the island of Ischia.

Charles made his triumphant entry into Naples on the 22nd of February, 1495, remained there three months, and then returned northwards on his way back to France. The French armies had during this time rendered themselves masters of the whole kingdom of Naples, with the exception of the towns of Bari, Gallipoli, and Reggio, and the fortresses of Tropea, Amantea, and Scilla, which still held out for Ferdinand. That sovereign was reduced to enter into negotiations with the conqueror, sending his uncle Frederic from his retreat in Ischia to Naples for that purpose. But the pretensions of the French monarch were such that all attempt to come to terms was abandoned. Ferdinand would have consented to hold his kingdom as a vassal of the French crown, paying a yearly tribute to

France. But Charles would hear of nothing save a total abandonment of all his claims to the throne, and his acceptance on those conditions of a duchy in the interior of France. And things had not even yet quite come to that pass with the Neapolitan branch of the house of Aragon. A.D. 1495.

Charles and his courtiers and captains behaved during their three months' stay at Naples in such a manner as to ensure the impartial hatred both of the Angevine barons of the kingdom, as whose friend and patron he came into Italy, and the Aragonese barons, who were the partisans of the rival pretender to the throne. As for the King himself, the tenour of his life at Naples, which may be found minutely recorded in the diary of André de la Vigne, was simply such as might have been expected from his puerile ignorance and utter incapacity. No sort of serious business was attended to or measures taken for assuring the too easy conquest which had been achieved by the French arms, or providing for the future government of the conquered kingdom. Nor had Charles any men about him capable of doing for him what he was so incapable of doing for himself. De Comines was away engaged on embassies to the other states of the peninsula, especially Venice, where he was gathering information respecting the feelings and movements of the Italian sovereigns, which led him to the conclusion that Charles and his army would do wisely to lose as little time as possible in finding themselves once more on the northern side of the Alps.

The nobles who composed the suite of the king, courtiers rather than soldiers, intoxicated with the pride of conquest, and the invincible valour which had been exhibited in scattering armies, running like sheep before the shepherd's dog, and in murdering the defenceless few who did not run, thought only of enriching themselves as quickly as possible with the spoil of the conquered nation. And Charles was willing to assist them in this object by all and

A.D. 1495. any means. It is recorded, that in the recklessness of the general desire to scrape together as much booty as could possibly be carried back with them to France, the king did not scruple to make grants to his courtiers of the military stores and provisions existing in the various citadels and fortresses, which they forthwith sold off for such sums of ready money as could be got for them. And this was done in a kingdom which France hoped to hold against a rival pretender, and to govern!

A more disgraceful page does not exist in history than that which records from first to last the story of this French expedition; but the readers of it will be divided in opinion, according to their own temperament and sympathies, on the question whether it was on the whole most disgraceful to the French or to the Italian people; whether the dissensions, hatreds, and abject want of patriotic feeling on the part of the Italian rulers, which invited the Frenchmen to over-run their country, and the extraordinary want of manhood, which permitted them to march almost unopposed from the Alps to Naples, which was stirred to resistance by no amount of outrage and insult, and which proffered their necks to the yoke and their cheeks to the scorner, were the more revolting spectacle; or whether on the other hand the ruthless brutality, cold-blooded ferocity, cruelty, insolence, faithlessness, rapacity, vain-gloriousness, and mean greed of the invaders were the more utterly hateful. Alas! the deeply-graven lines of national characteristics were on either side marked with fatal clearness; and did not both peoples reap the harvest proper in its kind from the seed which they were sowing?

Charles marched out of Naples on the 20th of May, 1495, leaving, to govern his newly-acquired kingdom as his lieutenant, his cousin Gilbert of Montpensier, who did not fail soon afterwards to lose all that had been gained by the French arms. On the 1st of June Charles reached

Rome. Being anxious to become reconciled to the Pope, rather, as Sismondi says,* for the sake of tranquillising his own conscience than on any grounds of political expediency, he restored the fortresses of Cività Vecchia and Terracina, which the French troops had occupied as they passed southwards, and specially commanded that the army should abstain from robbing or injuring the subjects of the Holy Father; a behest to which the French soldiers replied by sacking Toscanella, and massacring indiscriminately all the inhabitants of that hapless city. A.D. 1495.

On the 13th of June Charles was at Siena, when De Comines rejoined him with warnings that a storm was brewing in Italy, which made it very expedient for the French king to hurry his march northwards as much as might be.† But the king and those about him were not yet disposed to believe in any such necessity. On the contrary, Charles and his court were listening to a revolutionary party in Siena, which wished to place the city under French protection; and the Comte de Ligny flattered himself that he was on the point of establishing himself as Prince of Siena, by the aid of a handful of French troops which his royal master consented to leave behind him for so good an object. "The vanity of all which designs very soon appeared," says Guicciardini, "inasmuch as, very shortly afterwards, the Nine (who were the authorities at Siena, whom the revolutionary party and the French had ousted) recovered their wonted power, drove the French guard out of Siena, and dismissed the Bishop of Lille, whom Charles had left behind him as his representative."‡

In the meantime, while the other princes and govern-

* Histoire des Français, vol. xv. p. 207.

† Sismondi, Histoire des Français, cap. xxvi.; Philippe de Comines, lib. vii.; Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, lib. ii.; F. Belcarii (Beaucaire), lib. vi.; André de la Vigne, p. 139, *et seq.*

‡ Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, vol. i. p. 280, ed. cit.

A.D. 1495. ments of Italy were forming, mainly at the instigation of Ludovico il Moro, who had long since repented of his folly in calling the French across the Alps, a menacing league against France, Florence, which almost alone remained faithful to her alliance with the invaders, thought it necessary to make great rejoicings for the successes of the French army at Naples. "At Florence," says Guicciardini,* "they sounded Oh, be joyful! and made great demonstrations of rejoicing on receiving this news; although in reality they were displeased at it in their hearts. But the state of our relations with him (Charles), and the fact of our fortresses being still in his hands, made it necessary for us to do so."

Nevertheless Florence was not minded to have King Charles and his soldiers a second time within her walls. It was known that Piero de' Medici was hanging on to the king's suite; and for this reason more than any other, it had been determined in the city that if he presented himself at the gate it should be shut against him.† But Charles not wishing to run the risk of any such affront, determined to pass northwards by way of Pisa, leaving Florence to the right. Having advanced therefore from Siena to Poggibonsi, he turned off at that point towards the lower Valdarno.

While at Poggibonsi Charles had a visit from Savonarola. As before, the Friar announced himself as the special messenger of the Most High, charged to declare the will of

* Not in his general history destined for publication,—as the reader who has learned to distinguish Guicciardini writing for his contemporary public, from Guicciardini freely expressing his real sentiments in records meant only for posterity, may easily guess,—but in the Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. p. 128.

† This is the account of Bembo in the second book of his history. Guicciardini says, that Charles was given to understand that, although the city was prepared to receive him with all demonstration of respect if he came, yet that he would not be welcome, and that the city was being filled with armed men.—Storia d' Italia, vol. i. p. 286, ed. cit.

Heaven to the king, and to threaten him with summary and condign punishment, if he should hesitate to accept the self-declared prophet as the authorised expositor of the will of Heaven, or should fail to obey his word. Charles still held the fortresses which the Florentines had put into his hands. But the war was over; the time at which the French king had solemnly sworn to restore these places to the Florentines had arrived. Savonarola demanded that this promise should be forthwith kept, under pain of incurring the anger of God, and the visitation of his judgments. But all the ascendancy of the Friar failed to obtain any satisfactory assurance of the king's purpose. At one time he declared, that as soon as he got to Pisa the fortresses should be immediately restored; at another he alleged, that his promises to the Pisans would not permit him to do as Florence required of him. A.D. 1495.

When Charles arrived at Pisa, he found himself in a position of no little difficulty between the entreaties of the Pisans and the representations of the Florentines on the one hand, and the discordant wishes of his own followers on the other. The more politic of the men around him urged him to perform the promises to which he had solemnly sworn in the cathedral of Florence, and to assure the Florentine ambassadors, who were waiting his decision at Lucca, that he would do so. But the inhabitants of Pisa, with their wives and children, came weeping at his feet and entreating him to be as good as his word, and to save them from the unutterable misery and degradation of being again thrust back under the Florentine yoke. And a considerable portion of his own followers, moved by these entreaties and lamentations, influenced the king, for the honour of the French name, not to take back the boon he had granted, and give up these poor people into a slavery, the rigours of which would be increased tenfold in consequence of the resistance which they had been encouraged

A.D. 1495. to make by their reliance on the word of the King of France.

Charles, hard pressed on either side, gave renewed assurances to the Pisans that he would never give them up again to the Florentines; and privately declared to the ambassadors of the Commonwealth, that though he was prevented by certain valid reasons from doing as they would have him immediately, he would replace the fortresses in their hands as soon as ever he should have arrived at Asti. And thus Charles left Pisa, and continued his northward march, convinced by this time that De Comines had but too good reasons for the warnings he had given him at Siena, and that movements were taking place in the north of Italy which would in all probability make it necessary for him to fight his way out of the country he had entered so easily. Before leaving Pisa, however, he placed M. d'Entragues in command of the citadels of that city and Pietrasanta, in the place of the commandant who had previously held them.*

The Florentines, however, were well aware that small trust was to be placed in the promises of the French king if the execution of them was left to his own sense of right and honour. So they sent ambassadors after him to Asti,† to obtain from him there if it were possible the performance of the oath he had so solemnly sworn in the Duomo, on the occasion of his visit to Florence on his southward march. The citizens to whom this difficult mission was entrusted were Guid' Antonio Vespucci and Neri Capponi; and they did not start on their expedition empty-handed. That the King should be brought to keep his word without

* Guicciardini, cap. v. lib. ii. Storia d' Italia.

† In his general history, Guicciardini represents the negotiation of these ambassadors with Charles to have taken place at Turin.—Storia d' Italia, *loc. cit.* But in the author's Storia Fiorentina he says that the new agreement was concluded at Asti.—Op. ined. vol. iii. p. 135. I have preferred to follow the latter account. Compare Ammirato, Gonf. 1226.

the inducement of a small matter of cash in hand was not to be thought of. Of course Florence would have to pay, now as ever. A.D. 1495.

At last, and not without much difficulty, the King was induced to consent to an order for the immediate restitution of the fortresses being despatched to his lieutenant in Tuscany, "the inducement which was paramount to all others in the royal mind being," says Guicciardini,* "not the remembrance of his promises, and of the oath he had solemnly sworn, but the urgent need of ready money, and the necessity of making some provision for the affairs of the French army in Naples," which were already going ill.

And the order for the restitution of the fortresses, which was thus extorted from Charles, was by no means an unconditional one. Florence was to undertake to give up the citadels of Pietrasanta and Sarzana to Genoa if she should be required to do so by the King at any time within two years, in the case of his obtaining the dominion of that city. Thirty thousand ducats were paid down to the King in cash, for which, however, the ambassadors received in pledge certain jewels, to be restored as soon as the fortresses should have been consigned to them. Moreover, they undertook that the Republic should lend Charles a further sum of seventy thousand ducats when that consummation should have been reached. It was also stipulated that Florence should send, unless prevented by some new war within her own borders, two thousand five hundred men to the assistance of the French in Naples;—that all Pisans who had been concerned in the late rebellion against Florence should receive a full pardon and amnesty, and that they should be admitted to certain franchises and rights from which they had been previously excluded.†

* Storia d' Italia, vol. i. p. 342, ed. cit.

† Guicciardini, Id. p. 142, loc. cit., ed. cit.; Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. p. 135.

A.D. 1495. All these conditions having been agreed to, and the thirty thousand ducats paid down, the royal order was despatched to D'Entragues for the delivery of the fortresses. But when the orders reached Tuscany, the King's lieutenant refused to obey them. The citadel and port of Leghorn indeed were given up to the Florentines; but D'Entragues could not be got to relinquish Pisa or Pietrasanta. "Whether it were," says Guicciardini, "that he was influenced by that sympathy for the Pisans which took possession of all the French at Pisa, or was acting in obedience to secret instructions received from De Ligny, in subordination to whom he held his command, or was moved to act as he did by his love for the daughter of a certain Pisan citizen, Luca del Lante by name (for it is not credible that he could have yielded solely to the influence of money, seeing that he might have had more money from the Florentines than the Pisans could give him); whatever the motive was, he began to make all sorts of excuses, at one time assigning absurd and impossible meanings to the King's words, and at another maintaining that he had received the King's orders not to give up the fortresses in any case without receiving certain secret countersigns from De Ligny." *

The Florentines sent off other messengers to the King; and obtained from him a reiteration of his orders; but they were not sent by any man of rank or authority, but by a mere private messenger; and they did not prove more efficacious than the first.

In his smaller work on Florentine history, Guicciardini seems to have come to the conclusion that D'Entragues was simply bought by the Pisans, and that they were furnished with money for the purpose by Ludovico il Moro, of Milan. At all events, the upshot was that the citadels

* Guicciardini, Storia d' Italia, vol. ii. p. 13, ed. cit.

of Pisa, both the old one and the new, which the Florentines had built since they had had possession of the city, were given up by D'Entragues not to the Florentines but to the Pisans; Pietrasanta was sold by the King to the Lucchese, and Sarzana was handed over to the Genoese. "And thus," says Guicciardini, with a bitterness of spirit which it is easy to comprehend, "was our dominion torn piecemeal, and divided among our neighbours. A miserable thing indeed to have to relate, that Genoa, the Sienese, the Lucchese, who all of them so short a time before had trembled at our arms, now without fear or respect for our power should thus lacerate us, and lord it over us; not, however, by means of their own strength or credit, but by using the King of France as an instrument;—a King who, careless of the convention solemnly made by him in Florence, and sworn upon the altar, forgetful of the promises subsequently made at Asti, unmindful of our complete fidelity towards him, of all the money he had received from us, of our being alone in all Italy faithful to the engagements of alliance contracted with him, perfidiously sold us, and gave over our dominions to our enemies."* A.D. 1495.

Yes! all that Florence had accomplished by so many years of continued and persevering effort, and by the expenditure of such vast sums of treasure, had suddenly been undone, and the pride and ambition of her citizens wounded in the most susceptible part. For this Florentine desire of subjecting and lording it over Pisa was not a mere matter of political expediency understood and wished for only by politicians, nor a matter of dynastic aristocratic or military ambition, as were for the most part the wars between the Transalpine nations of Europe; but was the real passionate heart's longing of every citizen in Florence.

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. p. 137.

A.D. 1495. And now after the severe blow and disappointment that had befallen her, with the instinctive pertinacity of those insect tribes, which may be observed returning at once to the reconstruction of the works which some chance footstep,—a cataclysm of the insect world—has destroyed;—with the unwearied perseverance of an organization working according to the law of its being, Florence set herself anew to the repairing of the mischief that had been done, and the re-acquisition of her dependencies.

But Pisa, aware that she could have small hope now in these latter days of defending herself against the power of Florence, threw herself into the arms of the league which had been formed in the north of Italy between the Venetians and Ludovico il Moro, against France. Both these powers sent forces thither; but the crafty Ludovic, seeing that this occupation of Pisa was a matter from which great expense was sure, and much trouble was likely to arise, very shortly proposed to the Venetians to take this matter altogether into their own hands. And the Venetians, led by the counsels of a young Doge and his friends, were unwise enough to consent to do so, against the opinion of the older members of the Senate. Notwithstanding this, however, overtures were made by the above-mentioned league to Florence, to the effect that she should join the northern powers of the peninsula in their efforts to defend Italy against another French invasion. But the Venetians would not give up Pisa to Florence; and that was the first and all-important consideration with Florence in those days. Will Pisa be restored to us? If not, we do not desire peace in Italy; we do not wish that there should be union of the Italian powers; we do not want to keep out King Charles; "on the contrary, disunion was more to our purpose; an invasion by the French king, or any other source of disturbance, suited us better."*

* Guicciardini. Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. p. 138.

All the influence of Savonarola, too, was exerted to prevent the city from accepting the proposals of the anti-French league. A.D. 1495. It is difficult to understand how any Italian patriot could have doubted that the object of this league was a good and expedient one. It is difficult to believe that it could have seemed desirable to a Florentine patriot that Charles, who had plundered, damaged, and cheated Florence in so many ways, should return thither. It is impossible to imagine that there could have been much sympathy between the ascetic Dominican Friar and the utterly debauched and worthless crowd of French courtiers, and brutal French soldiers, who had not only plundered and insulted, but had done much to demoralize the city. Yet Savonarola was strong against the league, and in favour of the French alliance, resting on the hope of a second invasion by the French king!

How was this? It cannot be doubted that Savonarola was a genuine and earnest lover of his adopted country, whether we consider him as an Italian merely, or as, by adoption, a Florentine. Still less can the earnest sincerity of his moral convictions and exhortations be questioned. Savonarola was assuredly a patriot and a lover of virtue; but he had yet another character to sustain: he was a prophet also. Now King Charles of France was the prophet's "Flagellum Dei,"—the instrument for the verification of the prophecies which the Friar had staked his credit on, and which he was still uttering. After the establishment of the Great Council he was preaching to larger audiences than had ever been known, and "saying openly that he was sent by God to announce the things that were about to be, and affirming many things both as regarding the general condition of Christianity and the particular fortunes of our city. He preached that the Church must reform herself, and fashion herself to a better life, not induced thereto by goods and temporal blessings,

A.D. 1495. but driven by scourges and infinite tribulations. Italy, he said, must first be scourged and greatly afflicted by war, pestilence, and famine. It must be that she should suffer invasion at the hands of many foreign barbarians, who should cut her very flesh from her bones by their armies. She would be compelled, he declared, to submit to changes in her States, having no means of resistance either by counsel, by money, or by arms. He affirmed that our city would have to suffer manifold tribulations, and to be reduced to the extremest danger of losing her independence; but that, inasmuch as she was a chosen city of God, which had been selected for the prediction of these great things, and because the light of a renovation of the Church was destined to be spread over the whole world from hence, for these reasons Florence would not perish; but even if reduced to the point of losing all its territory, the city itself would be saved; and when brought at last by scourging to a true and pure Christian life, would recover Pisa, and all else that it had lost." *

Very worthy of note is the prophet's promise of the recovery of Pisa, as the reward of that return to a virtuous life, which he was so anxious to enforce. That was the then dearest object of every Florentine's ambition; and the prophet found it necessary, therefore, to promise the people whose political liberty he was so anxious to secure, that the reward of following the course he recommended to them should be success in destroying the liberty of their neighbours. But it is only too clear why a second invasion of Italy by the French king was necessary to Savonarola. He had entered on the fatal path of obtaining popular applause and reverence, and the power resulting from it, by advancing claims to supernatural gifts. When he accepted the ignorant admiration of the multitude on the

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. p. 138.

occasion of the verification of his very natural and simple prediction of the deaths of the Pope and Lorenzo and the King of Naples, he had already taken the first step on the path that could lead only to more or less self-conscious imposture. Very enthusiastic, very spontaneous was the outburst of reverence accorded by the people to the preacher, whose heart was but too open to the incense. But the populace is a ruthless master to its favourites. The applauded athlete must needs attempt feats more and yet more difficult, on pain of being hissed from the stage. The prophet, once recognised as such, could not withhold the exciting mental food he was supposed to be able to supply. There was no stopping short in the career on which Savonarola had without sufficient foresight allowed himself to enter. He must prophesy; and he must, on pain of losing that influence over the Florentines which it was, as he sincerely believed, so necessary for all the best interests of the Commonwealth, and indeed of the world in general, that he should retain, point to the verification of his predictions. Hence the invasion of Italy by the French King, which was to bring about all the political events and changes which he had ventured to foretell, was indispensably necessary to Savonarola. A.D. 1495.

"But this mode of preaching," says Guicciardini,*—and I cannot give the statement of the results of these sermons better than in his words,—"rendered him odious to the Pope, because in predicting the renovation of the Church, he very freely and undisguisedly attacked and satirized the government thereof and the morals of the prelates; it had rendered him hateful to the Venetians and to the Duke of Milan, who saw in him a partisan of France, and the cause of the Republic's refusal to join the league against that power. Lastly, this preaching had awakened much strong

* Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. p. 139.

A.D. 1495. party feeling in the city. For many of the citizens were, from their natural turn of mind, averse to putting any faith in similar denunciations. Others were hostile to him, because they hated that popular form of government which he so zealously advocated and maintained. Others again were enemies to the Friar of St. Mark's, because they were believers in, and partisans of, the Franciscans, and members of other religious orders, who were all of them opposed to him from jealousy of the immense reputation he had acquired. And many hated him, because they were men of profligate and vicious life, and saw with an evil eye the more strict mode of life which his invectives against debauchery and immorality had introduced. All these different classes were his fierce and bitter enemies, persecuting him in public, and opposing him by every means in their power."

The historian goes on to point out that neither were the men who constituted the Friar's party in Florence all belonging to the same category. The "Piagnoni" comprised not only the sincere believers in Savonarola and admirers of his doctrine, but a number of worthless hypocrites, who merely assumed the garb of sanctity as a cloak for their vices; and many who, without deserving to be ranked in this latter class, had yet no pretension to any place in that previously described;—men who looked at the whole matter with the eyes of a politician, and deemed that, as matters were going in Florence, backing the Friar would be found to be the winning game; among whom there were no doubt many who, having little care or sympathy for the religious side of the Friar's character and pretensions, yet conscientiously approved of his political views and of the measures which had resulted from them.

Such was the state of parties and of public feeling in Florence, which, beginning to develop itself clearly after the departure of the French king from Italy in the middle

of the year 1495, continued to prevail with ever-increasing violence and exasperation during the remaining years of Savonarola's life, and which was indeed but partially modified, as will be seen, by his death in the summer of the year 1498. For the Friar "being dead, still spoke," almost as powerfully as ever for several years after his martyrdom; and it is hardly too much to say that the distant echoes of that voice have not even yet ceased to be audible in Florence to ears that know how to distinguish the faint vibration of those far-off under-tones amid the roar of the fervid present time. A.D. 1495.

But it will be useful for the clearer understanding of the intricate party warfare, and the intense but perplexingly confused activity of life in Florence during the next quarter of a century, to point out here that those different classes of men, of whom, as Guicciardini has told us, the mass of the enemies of the Friar were composed, did not form one compact political party, but at the least two, who, however much they were agreed in opposition to Savonarola, were yet as bitterly opposed to each other.

The followers of the Friar were a more compact body, and are known throughout the histories of that time as "Piagnoni," or "Frateschi."

Their adversaries were either "Ottimati" or "Arrabbiati." The first were those aristocratic tories who, whether their own views or constitution of mind were or were not such as to render the Friar's religious teaching distasteful to them, at all events abominated his political doctrines;—men who, without being necessarily at all inclined to a Medicean restoration,—being indeed many of them bitterly opposed to the Medici,—could not tolerate the levelling tendency of Savonarola's political creed and measures;—men to whom the Great Council was an abomination, and who looked back to those ante-Medicean days, when the city was in fact ruled by an oligarchy of

A.D. 1496. leading citizens, as to the good old times. Such were the "Ottimati" or Aristocrats, decent and respectable men, as the times went, for the most part, who comprised in their ranks, not assuredly the largest intellects and hearts of their generation, but probably the far larger amount of practical political ability and State-craft.

The third notable party in Florence in those days,—the other division of the army of Savonarola's enemies,—were the "Arrabbiati," or the "furious ones," the *enragés*, as the French would with greater closeness of meaning express it. These were the men to whom the Friar was hateful, not for his politics, but for his religious teaching. They were for the most part young men of loose life and lax principles, whose main bond of union was a determination not to tolerate that, because Savonarola was virtuous, there should be no more cakes and ale in Florence. They did not by any means all of them hold the same political faith. Some wished for the restoration of the oligarchical form of government, as it had existed in Florence before the Medicean usurpations. Others did not object to the large democratical constitution inaugurated by the Frati. But they all disbelieved his prophecies, ridiculed his preaching, and detested his asceticism.*

Notwithstanding, however, the enmity of states and sovereigns abroad, and the fierce opposition of the parties, which have been described, at home, the influence of the Friar was still rising during these latter months of 1495, and the early ones of 1496. His furious invectives against luxury, frivolity, and dissipation of all sorts grew ever hotter and fiercer. And the zeal of his hearers, which consisted of by far the greater number of the Florentine people, flamed up, when his impassioned eloquence fanned it, as impetuously as his own.

* See Nardi, Istoria di Firenze, Ed. Firenze, 1842, vol. i. p. 120.

Fear, alas! as ever, was the great motive power put in action by the preacher. It was a cry that the world has heard before and since. "Woe! woe! flee from the wrath to come!" Give ear to *my* teaching! Obey *my* voice! And so you at least shall escape from the ills that will overtake the rest of mankind. This was the tone of all the Friar's denunciatory preaching. And doubtless no higher strain of teaching would have succeeded in producing an equally powerful effect on the audiences with whom Savonarola had to deal. There was abundantly sufficient moral evil in the social atmosphere around him, to produce a state of mind in his hearers eminently well calculated to second his menaces by the inward promptings of uneasy consciences; and abundantly sufficient visible danger in the political horizon to back up his denunciations by the intelligible probabilities of material and realisable suffering. And such have ever been the times, when prophets have loomed large on the imaginations of their contemporaries and on the records of history. A.D. 1496.

Florence was a luxurious city in those days. No more leathern jerkins with bone-buttoned girdles! Thrift and energy had generated wealth. Wealth had produced luxury. Luxury had led to effeminacy. and habits of spending in lieu of earning; and these were in their turn about to result in impoverishment. The luxury was a refined luxury, not unadorned by any of the embellishments which intellectual culture can contribute to the enjoyment of life; but at the same time little, or scarcely at all under the control of any of those laws which provide for the simultaneous well-being and development of the higher requirements of our nature. With the exception perhaps of Venice, there was probably no other community in the world at that day, in which so much stored up wealth existed, and in which the existing generation was

A.D. 1496. living so luxuriously, and with such prodigal, unproductive festivity, on the labour of their predecessors.

It was to the ears of such a generation as this that Savonarola had to address his political and religious warnings and teaching. The union and mutual action of the two is no new matter to Englishmen. We have seen the alliance of Puritanism and resistance to tyranny in our own country, and know how powerful a lever for the movement of the masses of mankind may be constructed out of the combined forces of the two. This was the engine wielded by Savonarola. To his mind—right enough so far—the moral regeneration of the people was indispensably necessary to their political reformation. But it was not sufficient for his purpose to move the hearts of his hearers. He too, like other preachers, was anxious for the outward and visible sign of an *opus operatum*;—some outward and visible act, of a much more startling and conspicuous kind than the mere individual "bringing forth of fruits meet for repentance,"—something that should exert all that superiority of force which collective action possesses over individual effort, and which makes a thousand united men more than a thousand times as strong as a thousand disjoined units,—something which should propagate by contagion as well as attest zeal and faith in the preacher.

And such a manifestation was more necessary to the Friar than to any ordinary preacher or prophet whose religious influence and standing only is at stake. Savonarola was not only this, he was a party chieftain in very troublous and dangerous times. He was, at the beginning of 1496, riding on the crest of the wave of popular favour and enthusiasm. But his position was by no means a secure one. It was exceedingly desirable for the preservation of his ascendancy over the public mind (which was itself so necessary to the regeneration and future prosperity of Florence), that the extent of that ascendancy should

be publicly manifested; that the party should show its strength. And "a demonstration," therefore, was determined on, which should have this effect, and at the same time be of a nature to stir up frantic zeal and act on the imaginations of an excitable population to the utmost. A.D. 1496.

It was a demonstration admirably well calculated to accomplish all these objects;—one, the like of which the world had not seen for very nearly fifteen hundred years, and which it has not forgotten since.

It was in the Carnival time, that the feasting, and revelling, and licence, which so remarkably characterised the Florentine manners of that day, were wont to be at the highest, and to break out beyond all limit of moderation or decency. And it was this period of unmitigated licence that Savonarola selected for the manifestation in question. The Carnival of 1496 should be kept in Florence with revels of a kind that the world had not yet seen.

Among other kinds of revelry it had been customary in Florence "to make bonfires in the squares; and on the evening of Shrove Tuesday to set fire to them according to ancient practice, dancing around them in a wanton manner, men and women hand in hand, and singing songs." * Taking his hint from this, Savonarola determined that all the wickedness of the city, as represented by whatever articles might be deemed to minister to luxury, or wantonness, or worldliness, should be burned on that day in a vast bonfire. Wisely and worthily Savonarola had given special attention to the teaching and reformation of the rising generation in Florence. And he had formed, specially by the assistance of his devoted disciple, friend, and follower, Fra Domenico of Pescia, a band of youths, on whose minds he had succeeded in impressing a wish for moral improvement, and an unhesitating devotion to and faith in himself.

* Vasari, Life of Fra Bartolommeo.

A.D. 1496. These lads, dressed as angels, were sent round the town from door to door to collect the objects for the great *auto da fè*. At each house they required the inhabitants to bring out "the vanities," or "the accursed thing," and as soon as they had received it, they recited a prayer composed by Savonarola for the purpose, and passed on to the next house. And the call was in the great majority of cases complied with, though doubtless in very many instances by people who would fain have preserved their property, if the example of others had not made them afraid to do so.

A huge pyramidal octangular scaffolding was raised in the *Piazza del Popolo*, filled with faggots inside, and encircled with fifteen tiers of great shelves around the exterior for the reception of the articles to be sacrificed. It will readily be conceived that when Monkish fanaticism was permitted to pronounce on the tendency of objects to promote luxury and worldliness, the condemned goods and chattels were of the most miscellaneous description. No doubt much was destroyed that deserved no better fate. For the age and society were thoroughly corrupt; and both literature and art had of course ministered to the prevailing tastes. But property to a very considerable amount of the most innocent description was sacrificed by the suddenly awakened zeal of its possessors; and in some instances art sustained irreparable losses. Fra Bartolommeo, who shortly afterwards took the Dominican habit in 1500, Lorenzo di Credi, and other artists, were induced to commit all their studies and designs from the nude to the flames.

"It came to pass," says Vasari, in his life of Fra Bartolommeo, "that as Fra Girolamo continued his preaching, and day after day exclaimed from the pulpit, that wanton pictures and music, and love stories and songs, often led souls into sin, the people were persuaded that it was

wrong to keep figures of men and women painted from the nude in houses where there were young persons; so that the citizens were excited by his eloquence Fra Girolamo in the Carnival of this year, persuaded them to bring to the usual spot on the accustomed day (to the spot in the Piazza, that is, where the bonfire was usually made on the last day of Carnival), a vast quantity of pictures and sculptures from the nude, many of them by great artists: and books, and lutes, and song-music; so that the loss, especially in painting, was very considerable. Baccio (Fra Bartolommeo) carried thither all his studies of designs from the nude; and Lorenzo di Credi, and many others, who were called Piagnoni, did the same." A.D. 1496.

Books in extraordinary quantities were heaped on the shelves of the doomed pyramid. The crusade was especially hot against the works of Boccaccio and Pulci, and some others of similar character. But the Puritan zeal extended its condemnation to whole categories of articles of a much less questionable kind. We find it recorded, for instance, that vast quantities of false hair were offered up by converted vanity. Women brought their head-dresses, costly shawls from the East, rouge-pots, essences, bottles of orange-flower-water, and perfumes of all sorts. Men contributed to the holocaust dice and dicing-tables, chess-boards of costly materials and artistic fashion, harps, lutes, and all kinds of musical instruments, playing cards, drawings, pictures, with "magical and superstitious books in incredible quantities."

The quantity of miscellaneous property thus condemned may be in some measure estimated by a fact, recorded with much exultation by Burlamacchi, one of Savonarola's early biographers. A Venetian merchant, seeing the heap, and thinking that there was a fine opportunity for doing a good stroke of business, offered a sum of twenty-two thousand florins (worth nearly, if not quite as many

A.D. 1496. pounds sterling at the present day,) for the collection. But the only result was, that his portrait was placed on the top of the pile, by the side of the monstrous figure intended to personify "Carnival," and burned together with it.

When all was ready at night, the fire was set to the heterogeneous mass by the hands of the magistrates; and while the flames, leaping high, threw fitful and quaint lights and shadows over the huge irregular mass of the Palace of the Republic, with its slender over-hanging tower, and the beautiful arches of the "loggia" of Orgagna, the excited fanatics danced round the pile to the sound of trumpets and shouts. "So that," says the historian Nardi, "upon that occasion the boys had a Carnival festival sufficiently magnificent and devout, in place of the inveterate custom of the populace to amuse themselves on that day with the stupid diversion of throwing stones, and other still more damnable practices of this our depraved generation."

Of all the popular and mundane diversions in vogue dancing seems to have been the only one which found favour in the sight of Savonarola. But as the people were then in the habit of singing in chorus while they danced, the great reformer thought it desirable to hallow the amusement by providing words of grace for the accustomed songs. Accordingly, Girolamo Benivieni, "the best poet of the day," says the historian Pignotti, and an enthusiastic disciple of Savonarola, produced a number of holy dancing songs, which were sung by the people, and the friars of St. Mark, who came from their convent into the piazza to dance with them in monstrous rounds, formed of one friar and one lay citizen alternately, all joining hands!

Some specimens of the hymns thus produced and then used, have been preserved; and they form a sufficiently curious illustration of the tone of mind and sort of devoutness, by means of which Savonarola sought to stem the

extreme licentiousness and corruption of the time, to excuse the reproduction of these extraordinary rhymes. A couple of them have therefore been printed at the end of this chapter, together with a tolerably close version in English doggerel for the benefit of those who do not read Italian. A.D. 1496.

It is curious to mark the similarity,—a genuine family likeness,—which is observable between these manifestations of Italian, and—more or less—Romanist fanaticism, and those so familiar to us of our seventeenth-century Puritans. There is perhaps, as might be expected, somewhat more of gross materialism, and a still fainter gleam of underlying spiritual feeling in the southern-grown piety than in that of the more northern race. But the attempt to bring the invisible within ken by pulling it down to us, instead of raising ourselves up to it,—the cunning trick of seeking to turn natural low instincts and popular habits to spiritual uses, by a simple change of phraseology,—the irreverent familiarity, and, what is more curious, the identity of the roots of all this in the same misconceptions of man's spiritual nature, and the means of purifying it, —are equally remarkable in either case.*

NOTE.—The "lauds" referred to run thus:—

"Non fù mai più bel solazzo,
Più giocondo, nè maggiore,
Che per zelo e per amore
Di Gesù devenir pazzo.

"Sempre cerca, onora ed ama
Quel che il savio ha in odio tanto,—
Povertà, dolori, e pianto,—
Il Cristian, perch' egli è pazzo."
"Non fù mai," *da capo.*

* Nardi, Istoria di Firenze, lib. ii.; Burlamacchi, Vita di Savonarola; Villari, Vita di Savonarola, libro terzo, cap. vi. See also a Life of Filippo Strozzi, by the present writer, from which a part of the foregoing account of "the burning of the vanities" has been taken.

" Discipline e penitenza
Son le sue prime delizie;
E i suoi gaudi e le letizie
I martir; perch' egli è pazzo."
" Non fù mai," *da capo.*

" Ognuno gridi come io grido,
Sempre pazzo, pazzo, pazzo!"

Which may be thus Englished,—

" Greater pleasure sure than this,
Or sweeter no man ever had,
Than for Jesus Christ's dear sake
To run with zeal and gladness mad."

" The Christian always seeks and loves
That which wise men deem most sad;
Poverty, grief, and pain, and tears,
The Christian loves, because he's mad."
" Greater pleasure sure," *da capo.*

" Discipline and penitence
Make the Christian ever glad;
And his chief delight and joy
Torments are,—because he's mad."
" Greater pleasure sure," *da capo.*

" Then let each man cry with me,
Mad, mad, mad, we'll ever be!"

The second is as follows. A closer similarity to some of the old Puritan conceits may be observed in it:—

" Io vo' darti, anima mia,
Un rimedio sol, che vale
Quant' ogn' altro a ciascun male,
Che si chiama la pazzia.
To' tre oncie almen di speme,
Tre di fede, e sei di amore;
Due di pianto, e poni insieme
Tutto al foco del amore.
Fa di poi bollir tre ore;
Premi infine, e aggiungi tanto
D' umiltà e dolor quanto
Basta a far questa pazzia."

Or in English,—

" I will give thee, soul of mine,
One medicine better far than all;
'Tis good for every mortal ill,
And some the medicine Madness call.

"At least three ounces take of hope,
Three of faith, and six of love;
Two of tears, and set them all
A fire of holy love above.

"Let them boil three hours good;
Then strain them off, and add enough
Of humbleness and grief to make
Of this blest madness, *quantum suff.*"

CHAPTER IV.

Unanimous desire of the citizens to recover Pisa—Isolation of Florence—The Venetians—The Pope—The Duke of Milan—Alliance of Florence with France—Views of Savonarola—Division of opinion in Florence—Parties in the Great Council—Death of Pietro Capponi—Ascendancy of the "Frateschi"—Invitation to Maximilian, king of the Romans, to march into Italy—His negotiations at Florence—Florentine reply—Maximilian's movements in Italy—His departure from Italy—Francesco Valori, Gonfaloniere—Succeeded in that office by Bernardo del Nero—Attempt of Pietro de' Medici to enter the city—Results of that unsuccessful attempt—Endeavour of a part of the Signory to obtain the condemnation of Savonarola—Disturbance at the Cathedral on Ascension day—Savonarola excommunicated—Discovery of a plot for the restoration of the Medici—Five citizens arrested—Difficulties respecting the trial of them—Board of two hundred citizens appointed for this purpose—Unjudicial character of this board—Discussion of the matter in this assembly—Line taken by the defenders of the five citizens—Appeal to the Great Council—Violent debates on the question of allowing this appeal—Excitement in the city—Illegal violence of the Gonfalonieri of the Guilds—Scene of confusion in the judgment hall—Letters from Rome received during the judgment—Effect of them—Condemnation of the prisoners without appeal—Timidity of the Signory—Violence of Francesco Valori—He forces the Signory to vote the condemnation—The prisoners brought into the hall in hope of exciting pity—The attempt unsuccessful—Francesco Valori provides for the execution of the sentence on the five prisoners—The execution of them—Part taken in this matter by Savonarola.

In the meanwhile the Commonwealth, though thus agitated by violent emotions, and torn by the dissensions of parties, which were becoming from day to day more distinctly defined, and more fiercely inimical to each other, was still anxiously striving to recover Pisa. On this subject alone all Florentines were of one mind, though they

differed much as to the line of foreign policy, which was most likely to lead to that consummation. But tories, radicals, puritans, *Ottimati*, *Frateschi*, *Arrabbiati*, friends of the Medici, and ultra-democrats were all equally bent on suppressing the liberty, and destroying the independence of a neighbour Republic. And it must always be borne in mind, that this was no case of maintaining union or putting down secession. For even if we consider the conquest of Pisa by Florence a completed and by-gone transaction, confirmed and systematized by lapse of time, so far as to justify the theory, that Pisa was a constituent part of the Commonwealth of Florence, still it was not union with Pisa that Florence wanted, but the subjection of the conquered city. It was not proposed or thought of for an instant, that the Pisans were to become free citizens of the Commonwealth; they were to become the disfranchised and "uncovenanted" bondsmen of the Florentine citizens;—the subjects of a more aristocratic or more democratic oligarchy, as the case might be. A.D. 1496.

Can it be thought that a people, who amid all their own troubles and dissensions were agreed only in wishing this, were either deserving or capable of freedom at home?

The efforts of Florence to recover her dominion over Pisa by force of arms, were crowned during this period with but a very small measure of success. The state of things in the city was not such as to enable it to carry on a foreign war with advantage. But besides this circumstance, which did less mischief in the matter than might have been expected, owing to the real concord of the citizens at least on this subject, Florence was now standing alone in Italy. Her line of policy had entirely isolated her; and for one reason or other every state in Italy was unwilling to see Pisa restored to her. For one reason or other;—but in no one case for the reason, that it was not

A.D. 1496. tolerable that one free city should destroy the freedom of a neighbour. Any such idea as this was still three hundred years beneath the mental horizon of Europe.

The Venetians were, as has been related, to all intents, in possession of the city for the time being: holding the citadel, and although not avowedly governing the city as masters, yet occupying such a position there as to make it easy for them to become such at the first favourable opportunity. And it was very evident, that they had no intention of relinquishing their hold. Their object was to wait for such an opportunity of establishing themselves in a position, which would have been of most important service to them in those ambitious views of acquiring a preponderating dominion in the peninsula, which there can be little doubt were at that time entertained in the council chambers of the Queen of the Adriatic.

Pope Alexander was unwilling to see Pisa restored to Florence, because it seemed, that if this source of hostility and difficulty were closed, there was nothing to prevent Italy from being entirely at peace; and the existing distribution of her soil into the various states that divided it among them, consolidated and permanently established. And this did not in any way suit the views of the Holy Father. His great object was to find or make somewhere or somehow in Italy a principality for his son. And how was this to to be attained if things were to remain as they were? The Pope's object, therefore, was to keep Italy in a condition which might at any time lead to a scramble for coronets and sovereignties.

The Duke of Milan, the ever restless Ludovico, was not willing that Pisa should be restored to Florence, for reasons very similar to those of the Venetians. He too had nourished hopes of putting his own hand on Pisa, with ulterior views also of the same kind. He was further unwilling that Pisa, if it was to return to subjection to

Florence, should be given up to that city constituted as she was at present. If he were to ally himself with Florence, and consent to her recovery of Pisa, he would at all events prefer that it should be Florence under the Medici, or at least under a government of "Ottimati." A.D. 1496.

Nevertheless, the other states were very desirous that Florence should join their league against France, and thus make Italy secure against a repetition of all the evils she had so recently suffered from French invasion. Florence alone remained on terms of friendship with France, and was continually urging the French king to return once more to Italy at the head of an invading army. And Florence, with her command of money, and holding the central position she does in the peninsula, could do much towards bringing about such an event. Her only object in this suicidal and un-Italian policy was the hope that by this means she might recover Pisa. No amount of evil was too great a price to pay for that paramount object. It was as great an object with the ascetic unworldly Savonarola, as with the most worldly ambitious "Ottimato" in the city. The Friar had promised the subjection of Pisa, as has been seen, as a boon to the Florentines, destined by God to reward their piety. And Savonarola was most eager for the return of the French king.

It is true, however, that the Friar had other motives for wishing this besides the hope of recovering Pisa. Charles was still in his eyes the "Flagellum Dei." He was to return to Italy for the execution of the wrath of God on a corrupt Church, and specially on a simoniacal and infamous Pope. It was more than ever necessary to the Friar that all this should be done, because he had again and again declared that it should be done. And that simoniacal and infamous Pope moreover was assuming a position and bearing towards the reforming Friar which made it more than ever expedient that he should be swept away by

A.D. 1496. some "Flagellum Dei," or otherwise, if the preacher were not to be swept away himself.

All these circumstances were tending to exacerbate the state of feeling in Florence, more and more from day to day. The grand division of parties now turned on the question, whether it were more desirable to accept the overtures of the league—Venice and Milan—and hope to obtain Pisa by means of negotiation with them—(for there were reasons for believing that Ludovico, already jealous of the power the Venetians were acquiring there, would not be averse to seeing Pisa restored to Florence, especially if Florence should return to a despotic or at least oligarchic form of government); or rather, to hold fast by the French king, refuse all the proposals of the league, and live in hope of a second French invasion. Of course, the "Frateschi" to a man were for the last course. But it is very easy to believe, that many an honest lover of his country might have thought that the first and foremost object of an Italian politician should be the protection of his native soil against a repetition of the disgrace and suffering which the presence of the French had occasioned.

But the usual mischiefs arising from the excess of party feeling, and the mingling with it of individual and family hatreds, which from first to last characterized the political life of Florence, were more and more strongly manifesting themselves. Already the Great Council was divided into two parts as by a line. "The hearers of the Friar banded themselves together by a sort of silent agreement. And as there were many citizens of note among them, and they were more in number than their adversaries, it was seen that the offices and public honours were distributed much more among them than among the others. And for this reason the city was manifestly ranged in two camps. And either party opposed the other in the public councils so fiercely, that men cared nothing for the public

weal, but were intent only on destroying the reputation of their adversaries."* A.D. 1496.

So strong and fierce was the faction hatred, that when news reached Florence in the autumn of 1496, that Pietro Capponi, who was serving as Commissary of the Republic with the army that was operating against Pisa, had been killed at the siege of a small castle in that territory, his death was made a matter of open rejoicing in Florence. He had served Florence well and nobly, as we have seen. He was removed from out of the heat of the fight which was raging in the great hall of the palace. He died in the prosecution of war, on the successful issue of which every heart in Florence was set. And yet because he had been considered the head of the party opposed to the Friar, Florence avowedly rejoiced over his death.†

The removal of Capponi left the party of the "Frateschi" more than ever superior to their adversaries in Florence. And there was no hope left that the city would consent to accept the proposals of the league. Ludovico, therefore, and the Venetian Senate determined on trying another means of frightening or forcing the Commonwealth into the path on which they were anxious that it should enter. This was nothing less than inviting Maximilian, King of the Romans, into Italy, tempting him with the hope of obtaining the Imperial crown at Rome.

It seems extraordinary that Ludovico, who had so lately bitterly repented of having invited the French to pass the Alps, and the Venetian Senate, which must have had sense enough to know the probable results of what it was doing, should have concurred in taking such a recklessly dangerous step. And that they should have done so furnishes yet another proof of the blindness to the nature of real

* Guicciardini, Storia d'Italia, lib. iii. cap. vi. vol. ii. p. 124, ed. cit.

† Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 144.

A.D. 1496. prosperity which the greed for extended dominion could produce. Both the Venetians and the Duke of Milan were looking forward to possibilities of conquest and appropriation, which the unstable condition of Italian political arrangements had taught them to look on as probabilities, and which rendered the far greater probabilities of more immediate evils of quite secondary importance in their sight.

Maximilian, before entering Italy, sent ambassadors to Florence asking for a free passage through the territory of the Commonwealth, and urging the Florentines to act as "good Italians;"* —a remarkable phrase, which indicates that the age was not insensible to the idea that Italians, as such, owed a duty to Italy as against the rest of Europe; and proves that the refusal of Florence to join the league for the purpose of defending Italy against French invasion was considered as laying the city open to the reproach of ignoring this recognized duty. Only it seems a strange argument in the mouth of the ambassadors of another monarch, equally with the French king an ultramontane invader. Florence, however, in her reply, did not touch on any such delicate ground as this; but with all possible courtesy told the imperial envoys that she would have the honour of sending an embassy to their sovereign, which would satisfactorily explain the line of conduct pursued by the Commonwealth.

The plain answer, telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth, would have been: "What does the King of the Romans mean to do about Pisa? That is the sole question. We care very little about being 'good Italians.' But we hope we are good Florentines. And we want and mean to have Pisa. Will your master give it to us? If not, we prefer the King of France, or any other king or

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 115.

power, whether of darkness or of light, who will do so. A.D. 1496.
We wish for peace and tranquillity in Italy, ... as soon as we have got Pisa. Till then, any and every element of perturbation and cause of change is preferable to us." This would have been an open-hearted reply, and would have very correctly set forth the whole foreign policy of Florence at this period.

Maximilian came to Milan, but had left that city for Genoa before the Florentine envoys who had been sent to him got there. They followed him to Genoa; but could get from him only evasive answers respecting his intentions when he should get to Pisa, for which place he was on the point of embarking. Of course the King of the Romans, called across the Italian frontier by Italian rulers to settle their affairs for them, declined to move an inch in the matter without full payment of his expenses, and a trifle in his pocket besides. Maximilian received a supply of cash from the allies while in Genoa. But having been delayed for many days by adverse weather, by the time he got to Pisa, after remaining a little while at Leghorn, the money was all gone. Moreover, a few ships which he had with him were discomfited near Leghorn about the end of October, partly by the weather and partly by some French vessels which had recently been sent from France as a manifestation in favour of the Florentines. Maximilian under these circumstances waited a short time at Pisa for a further supply of cash which he expected from the Venetians. But the Senate, cautiously jealous, and beginning to suspect that the King of the Romans was more the Duke of Milan's friend than theirs, was in no hurry to send the expected remittances. So that, after waiting in vain for a short time, Maximilian, sulky and indignant, washed his hands of the whole affair, and returned "vituperosamente," as Guicciardini says, to Pisa. "Cutting a very undignified figure," seems to give pretty accurately

A.D. 1497. the Italian historian's meaning; and it must be admitted that the attitude of a King of the Romans asking for his pay, and striking work because he could not get it, was not altogether an imperial one.*

Of course the rejoicing over his departure was great in Florence. It was felt that the delay of Maximilian's movements by the bad weather, the disunion between him and his employers breaking out just at the right moment, and the winds which fought on the side of Florence by helping to destroy his fleet, were all "a divine mystery, especially as Fra Girolamo had been all the time preaching and assuring the Florentines that they had nothing to fear, for that God would liberate them from the present danger."*

Evidently another case of prophecy, which helped not a little to keep up the character of the prophet and his ascendency over the public mind.

At the beginning of the new year (1497), accordingly, Francesco Valori, the now perfectly recognised head of the party of the "Frateschi," was elected Gonfaloniere. We have had Messer Valori on the scene already, and are acquainted with his rough-and-ready and thorough-going modes of political action. We know what to expect from the energetic citizen who showed his love of liberty by heading the populace when they rushed to the sacking of the Medicean palace, when we find him in the position of first magistrate of the Commonwealth. And no doubt Florence knew also what she expected when she made him her Gonfaloniere. One of the first acts of this ardent lover of liberty was to banish from Florence sundry preachers of the Order of St. Francis, who "openly contradicted" Savonarola. Of course. Was not Savonarola the great apostle and supporter of democratic freedom?

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 115.
† *Ibid.*, p. 148.

and shall it be tolerated that his doctrines shall be "openly contradicted?" A.D. 1497.

He also caused very severe laws* to be passed against those citizens who had gone to Rome to be near the Cardinal de' Medici (Giovanni, the younger brother of Pietro, afterwards Leo X.), enforcing their return to Florence, and prohibiting all intercourse with the exiled and outlawed family. He had great difficulty, we are told, in getting these laws passed, not so much by reason of any feeling in the city in favour of the Medici, as from the strength of the party inimical to the Friar.

In fact the state of parties in the city is very forcibly shown by the election of Bernardo del Nero to the office of Gonfaloniere, as successor to Valori, when his term of office came to an end at the close of February, 1497. Bernardo del Nero had become, since the death of Pietro Capponi, the foremost man, and recognised leader of the party opposed to the Frate. And to find him thus succeeding to Valori at the distance of two months from the election of that violent partisan of the "Frateschi," shows how the city was tossed to and fro by the violence of the party storm.

It was in the month of April, while Bernardo was still Gonfaloniere, that Florence was alarmed by an attempt of Pietro de' Medici to force his way back into the city. Bernardo was an old and well-known partisan of the Medici; and there were not wanting grounds of suspicion that he was in treasonable correspondence with the exiles. But it is also quite probable that the attempt of Pietro may have been invited by the simple fact of a partisan of his house being in position of Gonfaloniere. The moment might have been deemed opportune also because there

* "Legge asprissime."—Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 148.

A.D. 1497. was a good deal of discontent in the city on account of the exceptionally high price of food. Guicciardini says further that Pietro was incited and assisted to make the attempt by the Venetians. In any case it proved entirely abortive. The citizens heard that Pietro had been at Siena, and that he had left it, riding with a considerable number of armed men towards the city on the 27th. He came to a place called Tavarnella, a few miles only from the gates, that evening, intending to make his appearance at the Porta Romana early the next morning. But his plans were in fact deranged by so heavy a fall of rain, that his arrival at the gate was much delayed. Paolo Vitelli, an old soldier of the Republic, happened to be in the city, having recently returned from a prison at Mantua; and he was sent in the meantime with a small force to the Porta Romana, which he shut and barricaded, and so waited to see what would next happen.

That same morning of the 28th the new Signoria for the ensuing two months had to be appointed, and the citizens selected were all known opponents of the Medici,—a strong symptom that there was not just then much to be hoped or feared from any Medicean tentative. In fact the knowledge that Pietro was outside the gate caused very little excitement in the city. Some two hundred citizens of known Medicean proclivities were arrested as a precautionary measure. But there was no manifestation of any movement of the city in favour of the exile. And after he had waited some hours in the vain hope of such, he quietly turned about, he and his followers, and rode back again to Siena.

Nevertheless, little important as this ill-judged attempt was in itself, it did not fail to produce evils of the kind which have always followed the similar attempts of pretenders, however little real cause for alarm they may have been calculated to produce. The first immediate result

was to contribute to the rapidly rising violence of the party hatreds in the city. The new Signory, though opponents of the Medici, were also enemies of Savonarola, men of the party of the "Arrabiati," whose violence was worthy of the name. One Giovanni Canacci was the new Gonfaloniere, and he, together with another of the Signory, Benedetto de' Nerli, was determined to obtain no less than a condemnation of the Friar to death. There can be no doubt that any attempt at that time to put such a sentence in execution would have been a signal for furious civil war in Florence. Yet it was with the utmost difficulty that his friends, Messer Antonio Canigiani and Messer Baldo Inghirami, succeeded in always securing the necessary number of four favourable votes in the Signory to prevent his condemnation from being pronounced. As the Signory consisted of nine members, and as no condemnation to death could be pronounced without the concurrence of a majority of two-thirds, four votes of acquittal were sufficient to save a man. A.D. 1497.

It may easily be imagined how the prolongation during two months of a struggle such as this, in which the efforts of one party in the State to accomplish the judicial murder of the most popular man in Florence, were fought off with the utmost difficulty by his friends, must have kept the city on the verge of tumult. It was generally felt that it was impossible that things should go on much longer without an outbreak; and it was very much feared that some terrible scandal would take place on occasion of the Friar's preaching in the cathedral on Ascension day. Accordingly, when that day came there was a great disturbance in the church, and threatening cries were heard. Savonarola, as Guicciardini declares, became much alarmed,* and giving up all idea of preaching, returned,

* "Si vedde in lui gran segno di paura." Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 151.

A.D. 1497. guarded by a numerous body of armed citizens, to the Convent of St. Mark.

After this incident men's minds became from day to day, says Guicciardini, more and more exasperated, until in the month of June Pope Alexander launched a bull of excommunication against the Friar, caused it to be published in Florence, and thus reduced him for a time to silence. He had before been summoned to Rome by the Pontiff to answer certain accusations of heretical preaching. But he had alleged more or less valid excuses for not obeying the citation; and this contumacy, together with an accusation of heresy, was stated as the motive for his excommunication. Savonarola obeyed the Papal bull so far as to abstain from preaching during the following months; and as this silence in some degree quieted the violence of his opponents, the city for a while seemed somewhat more tranquil.

This lull lasted, however, but a very few months. For in the August of that same year, 1497, a circumstance occurred which shook the whole fabric of Florentine society to its foundations. It had been suspected, when Pietro had made his attempt to enter the city that spring, that treasonable negotiations and correspondence had been carried on between him and certain of the citizens who were known to be favourable to his restoration. But the unimportant results of the attempt, and the violence of the disputes respecting the Friar which were raging at their highest at that time, had caused the matter to be passed over without much examination. But in August, Messer Francesco Gualterotti, a private citizen, not at that time a member of the government, received a letter from one Lamberto dell' Antella, who was then at Rome, and who had himself been sentenced to exile some time previously for holding communication with the exiled family. In this letter Lamberto declared, that if he were provided

with a safe conduct from the Signory he would come to Florence and reveal certain matters to the government which it highly imported them to know. It would seem that while at Rome, where, in consequence of the residence of the Cardinal de' Medici in that city, most of the schemes and intrigues for the restoration of the Medici were carried on, this Lamberto, having the confidence of the exiles, had made himself acquainted with the secrets of the party, and the movements of their friends in Florence. And now he purposed to sell such knowledge to the Florentine government either for permission to return to his home, or simply for a money payment. His offer was not at once accepted, but it would seem that some overtures were made with a view of bargaining with him for his secret. As time went on, however, and nothing was concluded between the parties, Dell' Antella at length ventured to come so far towards Florence as to pass the frontier of the territory of the Commonwealth. But he had hardly done so before the fact was known to the ubiquitous eyes of the Signory. The would-be informer was at once arrested, and a shorter method of dealing with him adopted than he had anticipated. He was "treated to a taste of the rack," * and soon disclosed sufficient facts to put the Signory on the way to discover all they wanted to know. It was ascertained that many were implicated in treasonable correspondence with the exiled family, whose social position was such, and whose family connexions were so powerful, that the dealing with them would be a very serious and difficult matter. In fact mandates for the arrest of a great number of citizens were issued. Many took alarm, and at once escaped; but five men, all of high standing in the city—Bernardo del Nero, Niccolò Ridolfi, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, Giannozzo Pucci, and Giovanni Cambi—were arrested. A.D. 1497.

* "Avuto della fune," as Guicciardini says.—Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 158.

A.D. 1497. They were all examined under torture, and it was proved, or considered to be proved, that Tornabuoni and Pucci had written to and received letters from Pietro de' Medici, giving him information of the state of things in the city, and encouraging him to attempt a restoration. Niccolò Ridolfi and Cambi were shown to have conferred with them with a view to the same object. And Bernardo del Nero was shown to have received intelligence of these schemes when he was in office as Gonfaloniere; but it did not appear that he had been implicated in any way beyond that, or had taken any active steps in the matter whatever.

According to the usual course of the administration of justice, it was the duty of "the Eight," to whom the executive power was confided, to judge and pronounce sentence on the prisoners. But these magistrates, alarmed by the high social and political position of the criminals, instead of proceeding with their duty in the regular way, referred the case to the Signory. The Signory, however, as little desirous of taking upon itself so disagreeable a duty, replied that the law neither required nor authorised them to interfere with the course of criminal justice;—that it was, on the contrary, the plain duty of "the Eight" to act in the matter. Nevertheless, in consideration of the importance and difficulty of the case, twelve other citizens were appointed to assist the Eight in performing their duty.

Some of the historians* speak of fresh revelations obtained by this body of twenty from the informer Dell' Antella, showing the existence of a new plot for the restoration of the Medici, a scheme for another attempt to be made in the middle of that month of August. And these discoveries seem to have caused a paroxysm of alarm

* Nardi, Istoria di Firenze, vol. i. p. 133.

in the city, notwithstanding the utter and hopeless failure of Pietro's last attempt. Guicciardini does not mention this supplementary revelation. The five prisoners were, however, pronounced guilty of high treason, for having been more or less intimately concerned in these schemes, by the board of Twenty thus constituted. But the twelve citizens who had been assigned to "the Eight" as assessors thereupon retired, and "the Eight" were left as before to incur the responsibility and odium of pronouncing the sentence. Thereupon that magistracy again attempted to throw off their responsibility on to the shoulders of the Signory, and again that legislative body refused to undertake a duty not assigned to them by the constitution. In this difficulty it was proposed to refer the matter to the Great Council,—a body about as unfitted as can well be imagined for the discharge of such an office. But to this proposal the counsel for the prisoners vehemently objected, protesting against communicating to the public matters which ought to remain secrets of State, because the magistrates were afraid to do their duty. The fact was, that it was well known that there were four among the Signory who would not vote for the capital condemnation of the prisoners; and these four votes would have sufficed to secure their safety, if the matter had remained in the hands of the Signory, a majority of two-thirds of that body—*i.e.*, six—being necessary to a decision. A.D. 1497.

The prisoners' counsel were not able to induce the Signory to take the case into their own hands; but they did obtain the appointment of a new body of nearly two hundred, composed of most of the various boards of magistrates, who were ordered to assemble on the 17th of that month (August) for the reconsideration of the case. And this was a great point gained, for it was gaining time, which was everything to the accused; since at the end of August a new Signory would come into office, and

A.D. 1497. they had good hope that it might be one sufficiently friendly to ensure their escape.

Whatever might be the temper and disposition of this very heterogeneous board thus composed, the prisoners hoped not unreasonably that it would be possible to involve such a body in long and perhaps tumultuous discussions, which might be made the means of tiding over the remaining days of the official life of the present Signory. But Francesco Valori was there,—one of the new board,—Francesco Valori, who was the close friend and disciple of Savonarola, who was the avowed head of the Frateschi and the popular party, who was all-powerful with the multitude, and who would be unquestionably the foremost man in the city, if Bernardo del Nero, the avowed leader of the opposition party, were removed.

Guicciardini* analyses carefully the component parts of this body of nearly two hundred men, chosen for this solemn judicial office without the smallest, even pretended, reference to any capability, or even fitness by reason of supposed impartiality, for such a duty. And he shows the different motives which led the different sections of this so strangely-constituted judicial body to lean towards a more or less favourable decision. We do not find in this remarkable statement the slightest trace of an attempt to consider the matter judicially, or any reference whatever to the law of the case, or to the evidence of guilt. The small and feeble attempts which were made by some of the members of the board to save the accused men, proceeded entirely from personal feelings of regard or friendship. The much more general determination to put the prisoners to death was urged by considerations which, without even any decent veil of pretence, stamp the decision with the most revolting character of judicial murder.

* Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 159.

But it must not be supposed that these are the reflections of the sixteenth-century statesman. These are the thoughts which might occur to nineteenth-century writers and readers. Guicciardini most dispassionately and lucidly points out the different fears and hatreds that produced the determination to take the lives of these men, appearing to consider the operation of such causes to such an end perfectly natural and normal. A.D. 1497.

The debates in this judicial council were exceedingly stormy. There could be no doubt that the great majority of those present were desirous of condemning the prisoners to death. But it was not impossible to cause the mode of voting adopted to be such as might throw some doubt on the decision of the whole body, or might perhaps hurry the deliberation to an end in tumult without pronouncing any resolution. It has been explained that the assembly of nearly two hundred judges, who were called upon to pronounce sentence, was composed of various constituted boards of magistracy, or official bodies. The Signory, therefore, directed that each of these should debate the matter separately among themselves, and should then declare the decision to which they had come. This mode of operation disconcerted very materially the plans of the prisoners' defenders; and the result was an almost immediate sentence of condemnation. This was worse than the friends of the accused had expected; and their defenders were for some minutes so taken aback by it, that they seemed to have lost all hope. But still the consciousness that they had four safe favourable votes in the Signory, encouraged them to try yet once again to induce the assembly to take a line which might result after all in throwing the matter back again into the hands of that body.

They protested loudly against the method of voting which had been adopted, maintaining that the real sense

A.D. 1497. of the assembly could be taken only by recording the separate vote of each individual member. They hoped that personal timidity, and even the awkwardness of expression and shyness of men unaccustomed to speak before such an audience, might be turned to a means of throwing doubt upon the votes, and thus, at all events, the present sitting might be got over without a fatal decision having been reached. But, as has been said,—and as the anxious prisoners and their friends said often enough to each other,—Francesco Valori was there. And he would be the most powerful man in Florence when Bernardo del Nero should be decapitated. Valori saw and understood at once the intentions of the friends of the prisoners; and at the same moment saw the means of defeating it. He stepped up quickly to the table of the Signory, and saying in a voice loud enough to be heard by all present, and in the fewest and simplest possible words, that he judged the accused worthy of death, required that to be registered as his vote. And the rest of the assembly, with very few exceptions, following their leader like sheep over a hedge, stepped up one after another to the table, and voted in the same form of words.

And then indeed it seemed as if the last hope of saving the lives of the prisoners was lost. But yet there was one other chance. A recent law, passed at the instance of Savonarola,—passed, therefore, by the party who were now urging the condemnation of these partisans of the Medici,—enacted that from every capital sentence an appeal should lie to the Great Council. This law, therefore, was invoked, and an appeal demanded. And of course it was impossible for any man to say what might be the result of taking the votes of so large and mixed a body on such a question.

The question whether the appeal should be allowed or not was at once referred to the Signory; four of whom

voted in favour of admitting the claim. The necessary majority for giving effect to a capital sentence was not therefore obtained. The enemies of the prisoners feared that they were going to be baulked of their prey after all. And so great a tumult in the assembly was the consequence, that it was found necessary to break up the sitting and defer the final decision on the case till another meeting fixed for the 21st. A.D. 1497.

The agitation and excitement which this struggle for life and death had produced in the Palace, and among the upper classes of society, had in the mean time descended into the Piazza among the populace, And as the main strength of the "Frateschi" was there, the popular feeling was all adverse to the accused. Sinister cries for blood were heard in the streets;—assertions that the Republic was in danger, and loud demands that "justice" should be done. The whole city was debating the question whether the appeal should be allowed or not. That the law clearly said that it should, was not for an instant deemed a sufficient answer to the doubt of either party. Those in favour of the prisoners talked loudly about the natural supremacy of the entire body of the people, and about the lives of the citizens belonging only to the body of the citizens to take, or to give. The opposite party urged, that the law which instituted the appeal had only intended it as a safeguard against the taking away of any man's life by the votes of six men in the Signory;—but that the present was a very different case;—that the public had already decided the matter in the Assembly of Two Hundred;—that it was absurd to demand an appeal from such a sentence as that.

In this violently excited state of the public mind the members of the assembly met together again on the 21st of August. The debates in the hall, or rather the disputes, ran high. Suddenly the heads of the Guilds, who

A.D. 1497. were among the constituent parts of the assembly, rising furiously to their feet, declared that they would bring out the Gonfalons of the Companies into the streets, and would lead the people to sack the houses of those who attempted to prevent the execution of the sentence. This proposition of these ardent lovers of liberty raised the tumult and confusion in the hall to the highest pitch. Above all the din was heard the voice of Francesco degli Albizzi, screaming out incessantly, "Let justice be done! Let justice be done!" The defenders of the prisoners did all they could to increase the confusion and disorder. For it was already nightfall, and their hope was to obtain another prorogation of the assembly. The days were going on; and if only the entry into office of the new Signory could be reached! The fury of the populace, roaring for the blood of the victims, itself stood in the way of the gratification of its own desire. For the mob invaded the judgment-hall, and added so much to the disturbance, that it was absolutely impossible to proceed to any sort of decision.

But just at that conjuncture letters from the ambassadors of the Republic residing at Rome were brought to the Signory. They were read at once, and found to be full of matter calculated to inflame the minds of the Florentines against the prisoners. It seemed from the tidings sent by the agents of the Republic, that there was more real danger in these tentatives of the Medici than had been hitherto supposed. Larger and better combined schemes were on foot. The Pope was wholly favourable to the Medici, and disposed to aid them by every means in his power. The Duke of Milan, whose apparent moderation towards the Republic was merely a blind, was plotting with Pietro, and prepared to second, with all the means he could command, an attempt to effect a forcible restoration of the Medicean rule in Florence. Formidable masses

of troops were being gathered in Romagna with this view. A.D. 1497

All this, adding terror to the enmity which already animated the minds of by far the greater number of the judicial assembly, produced a sudden determination to have the prisoners condemned and executed out of hand. Once again the various sections of the judicial body retired to their separate benches in different parts of the hall; and this time the spokesman of each of them, acting the part of the foreman of a jury, as we should say, declared aloud the verdict of each body. All were for condemnation and capital punishment, and the refusal of the appeal to the Great Council. They did not, however, strictly limit themselves to this declaration, but "motived" it more or less at length. The doctors of law, who formed one of the sections, declared by their foreman that the danger of the State justified the refusal of the right of appeal; but that if it were granted, it should at all events be made and the matter finally decided on the morrow. "The Eight," who ought, according to the constitution, to have done alone what this large mixed body was thus attempting to do, said by their foreman, that the appeal must absolutely be refused; for that, if perchance a reversal of the sentence should be obtained from the Great Council, it would cause civil war, and the utter ruin of the city. The private citizens, holding no judicial office, who had been added to the assembly, and who formed twelve different sections, or separate juries, confined themselves to saying curtly, "The execution of the sentence, and that forthwith!"

But every one of the spokesmen or foremen, in giving in these verdicts to the Signory, added the customary formula, consecrated by the usage of many generations on occasions when any bodies of the citizens were admitted to consultation with the Signory:—"Nevertheless, we shall

A.D. 1497. approve any determination which it shall seem good to your Lordships to take."

The words were mere words of course, spoken from the force of habit and custom; but the Signory, who were still timid, and reluctant to send to the block five of the principal citizens of the State, whose deaths would make five powerful families their implacable enemies, fancied that these phrases indicated a degree of moderation in the assembly, which might make it still possible for them to temporize. It was already three hours after sunset; the members of the assembly were wearied and anxious to get away; and the Signory, hoping to bring this one day more to an end, without doing anything, began to recommence long arguments among themselves upon the merits of the case.

But Francesco Valori, seeing their drift, and losing all patience, rose with fury in his eyes and gestures, and rushing up to the bench of the Signory, seized the balloting box, which was to receive their decisive vote, and striking it violently against the table, cried aloud "Let justice be done! Let justice be done!—or there will be trouble here!"

Upon that, Messer Luca Martini, who was the "Proposto" of the Signoria for the day, and on whom devolved therefore the duty of putting all questions to the vote, afraid to delay any longer, presented the balloting box to his colleagues. Five voted for the execution of the sentence. But the remaining three still held firm, and gave contrary votes in favour of the appeal.

Then Francesco Valori, breaking through all form and rule, raised his voice again, so that it might be heard, hoarse with passion, in every part of the hall; and warned the Signory, in very violent language, that the people had expressed their will unmistakably enough;—that they had had proofs enough that the safety of the Republic impera-

tively demanded of them that they should give effect to that will;—that they were placed in the position they held for no other purpose;—and that it would assuredly go hard with any man, who should venture to oppose himself to the declared will of the people. A.D. 1497.

Speaking thus, he again seized the ballot-box, and presenting it himself with violent and menacing gestures to the members of the Signory, one after another, so intimidated the four dissentients, that they all of them gave the vote he demanded of them.

In the meantime a scene was being enacted in the hall, which very curiously illustrates the manners and habits of thinking of the place and time. As a last chance, the defenders of the prisoners brought the unhappy men into the hall, with bare feet, and in chains, in the hope that the sad spectacle of these men, whom all the city had been wont to look up to with respect, might cause a revulsion in the feelings of the assembly. Most, if not all of those present had personally known the prisoners;—had probably interchanged with them the courtesies and in many cases the kindnesses of social life;—many had called them friends; and could they now look on their well-known features and still thirst for their blood? Lorenzo Tornabuoni! the gay, brilliant, open-handed young patrician, beloved in his own social sphere, and popular among all classes of the citizens! Niccolo Ridolfi! known to be one of the most promising statesmen in the city; highly gifted, and perfect in all accomplishments! And Bernardo del Nero, above all! the venerable old man, whom more than one generation of Florentines had been wont to look up to as one of the fathers of the city, whose fault in this matter was at worst the not having denounced the faults of his friends! Were these men, standing there with bare feet, and chains on their limbs, and eyes beseeching pity, to be sent to the headsman?

A.D. 1497. But it was very soon but too clear that nothing was to be hoped from this last theatrical resource of a Florentine counsel for the prisoners. So far from any emotion of pity being awakened in the assembly, it was with difficulty that the members could so far command their hatred of these convicted friends of the Medici, as to keep their tongues and their hands from insulting them.

So the doom was pronounced; and the five culprits were taken away to undergo it, with very brief space of time for preparation.

Francesco Valori hurried from the hall of assembly, to see to the posting of an armed force in such sort as should obviate any dangers of a rescue. The city continued in a state of great agitation, and great numbers of all ranks crowded to suffocation the court of the "Bargello," to witness the execution of the sentence. It was three hours after sunset, as has been said, before Valori succeeded in forcing a vote of condemnation from the Signory. And at seven hours after sunset, the roar of the crowd at the Bargello was hushed, as the prisoners were led one by one to the block in the centre of that gloomy court-yard, where so much of the best blood of Florence had been shed, and where so much more was yet to be spilled.

And of all the hungry eyes that greedily marked the falling of those heads, there was probably not one that was not savage with the remembrance of some relative similarly done to death, generations ago perhaps, by the deed or by the connivance of some connection of the sufferer of that day. And of those who gazed on the deaths of these men with other feelings, there was, without doubt, not one who was not looking forward with bitter eagerness to the time when the tables should be turned, and these victims be avenged by others. And thus the legacy of party and family hatreds was

stored and transmitted from generation to generation in Florence.* A.D. 1497.

And what of Savonarola all this while? What was the preacher of unity, charity, forgiveness, political moderation, peace on earth and goodwill towards men, doing in this matter, which was convulsing Florence from the palace to the hovel?

He was remaining in the strictest seclusion in his convent of St. Mark. Prevented from preaching by the bull of Pope Alexander, he was employing his enforced leisure in "correcting the proofs of his 'Trionfo della Croce.'" And the eloquent biographer of the Friar labours to show that, inasmuch as he was prohibited from speaking to the people from the pulpit, he was powerless to do anything towards saving these men from death. We find nothing, he says, in the historians of the time, nor in the biographies of Savonarola, to lead us to think that he took any part either for or against the five victims. He says himself, speaking of Bernardo del Nero, "I did not advise his death. I should indeed have been glad that he should have been sent away." Again, he says, that he had not interfered in the matter of those five citizens, but that he had recommended *though coldly*, Tornabuoni to the mercy of Valori. Which shows, says Professor Villari, that if he took any part in the matter, he endeavoured to mitigate the fury of the people.†

But it proves that he was in communication with Valori during this time;—which indeed could not have been doubted without any such proof. Nor can it be supposed that the seclusion of the Prior's cell in the convent of

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, cap. 15, op. ined. vol. iii; Nardi, Istorie Fiorentine, lib. ii. ad an. 1497; Guicciardini, Storia d'Italia, lib. iii. cap. 6; Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. ii. lib. 4, cap. 3; Pitti, Storia di Firenze, vol. i., Volume del Archiv. Stor. Ital.

† Villari, Vita di Savonarola, vol. ii. p. 53.

A.D. 1497. St. Mark was so profound, or the correction of the proofs of the "Trionfo della Croce" so engrossing an occupation, that Savonarola, who had for months past been the directing spirit of the political world in Florence, could have remained in ignorance of, or untouched by passions which were tearing the city in halves, and convulsing its social life to the foundations. Can it be supposed that the prophet was uninformed of what was passing on the outer side of his cloister wall? Can it be believed that he was even an indifferent spectator of a struggle, in which the fortunes of the party with whose success his success, and very probably his life itself was bound up, were involved;—a struggle in which his intimate friend and leading disciple Valori was straining every nerve to insure the victory to the Frateschi? Savonarola confesses that he recommended Tornabuoni "coldly" to the mercy of Valori. Why, if the prophet deemed him worthy of mercy, did he speak *coldly* in favour of sparing that young life at stake? Why was there no word for the venerable Bernardo del Nero, whose criminality was clearly and avowedly less than that of Tornabuoni? The reply to this latter question is, it may be feared, to be found in a brief remark of Guicciardini. Valori, the historian says, grieved for the death of Tornabuoni, and would fain have saved him; but that could not be done without saving the others also; and Francesco Valori could not afford to lose the opportunity of removing Bernardo del Nero out of his path.*

I am afraid that it is impossible to doubt that Savonarola, despite the attention required by the correction of the "Trionfo della Croce," was accurately well informed of every step and every phase of the life-and-death struggle that was being played out a few yards outside his convent

* Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. p. 159.

door;—that it was perfectly and indubitably within his power to have saved the lives of those five men, by a timely exertion of his influence, if he had willed to do so; —and that the taking off of Bernardo del Nero was to the full as desirable and necessary to him, as it was to his disciple Valori. A.D. 1497.

But these were not days when it was expected by any, that either clerk or layman, aristocrat or democrat, prophet or profligate, should spare the life of an enemy, when it was within his power to ensure the death of him.

And so "justice was done" in Florence, and the dragon's teeth were sown.

CHAPTER V.

The "Frateschi" in the ascendant—Savonarola begins to lose ground in the city—The untenableness of his position as a Catholic—Formation of the company of the "Compagnacci"—Soderini and his son—Efforts of the Signory to induce the Pope to withdraw his excommunication—Savonarola after six months' silence determines to preach in defiance of the excommunication—Prohibition of the archbishop—Decisive action of the Signory in Savonarola's favour—Savonarola's arguments in justification of his disobedience to Papal authority—Futility of them—His prophecies—Equivocal explanation of the non-fulfilment of them—The amount of belief he had in his prophetical gift—Second burning of "the vanities"—Disapproved by a large party in the city—Effect produced by Savonarola on the world at large—Fear added to the anger of the Pope—Negotiations of the Signory with the Pope—Florentine determination not to give up Savonarola to be judged at Rome—Savonarola prohibited from preaching in the cathedral—The anger of the Pope against the Signory—Painful position of the Florentine envoys at Rome—Savonarola prohibited from preaching at all—His endeavours to cause the calling of a council of the Church—His messenger to France arrested in Milan; and his letters sent to the Pope—Rage of the latter—Enmity of the Franciscans to Savonarola—Challenge to the ordeal by fire—Fra Domenico—The three *dicta* of Savonarola—The ordeal by fire promoted by the "Compagnacci"—Their motives—Difficulty in bringing the Franciscans to the point—Fra Giuliano Rondinelli consents to be the champion on the part of the Franciscans—The conduct of Savonarola with regard to the ordeal—Of the Signory—A few sane men strive to prevent the ordeal—"Piagnoni" anxious for it—Savonarola's vacillation on the subject—Seventh of April finally appointed for the ordeal—Arrangements for it in the Piazza—Scene in the Piazza on the morning of the Seventh—The pile—Tergiversation of the Franciscans—Impatience of the people assembled in the Piazza—Disturbance in the Piazza—Marcuccio Salviati—Determination of the populace to await the spectacle of the ordeal—Scholastic discussion between the Dominicans and Franciscans—The Signory forbid proceeding with the ordeal—Disappointment and anger of the people—Injustice towards Savonarola—Reproaches made to him by his own party—His humiliation—Return to the convent.

A.D. 1497.

And the dragon's teeth were sown in soil far too favourable for such seed, for any long time to elapse before an abundant crop began to spring up from them. For the moment, the violent blow inflicted on the parties adverse to Savonarola by the execution of the five citizens, and especially of Bernardo del Nero, made the faction of the Fratteschi all powerful in Florence. In the ensuing six months, three Signories were chosen, wholly devoted to that party. Nevertheless, an acute observer of the times and of the social currents, might have seen already that Savonarola was, to a certain degree, losing his hold on the popular mind; and an adept in the interpretation of such signs of the times might have predicted, without entering into rivalry with the prophetical claims of the Friar, that the time was not far distant, when he might haply reach the same or a worse pass than that to which his enemies had been reduced.

He was under sentence of excommunication. In vain he laboured to show, with all the learning and eloquence that could be brought to bear on the subject,* that he was not bound to yield obedience to the wrongful and unjust censures and commands of an infamously wicked Pope. And in vain Professor Villari attempts to reconcile his disobedience with purity of Catholicism. The difficulty is an old one, and constantly recurring. Of course, it was a portentous and altogether monstrous thing, that such a man as Alexander VI. should hold spiritual authority and control over such a man as Savonarola. Portentous indeed! and what such portents portend is now at last beginning to be intelligible to most men. But the only way out of the *cul-de-sac* difficulty, in which Savonarola and his orthodox defenders found and find themselves, is by throwing down the walls which formed the *cul-de-sac*. If it

* Villani, Vita di Sav., vol. ii. p. 75.

A.D. 1497. be competent for a Roman Catholic priest to decline rendering obedience to the commands of the highest authority of his church, because he conceives them to be bad and wrong commands, there is an end of the whole mighty fabric of the Catholic Church. We are landed in full Protestantism. The thing is too self-evident to need or to bear demonstration. According to the rules of the society which calls itself the universal church, Savonarola *was* bound to yield passive obedience to the commands of the Pope, and when excommunicated to consider himself and behave as under the ban. If these laws did not suit him, his sole remedy to quit the association.

Alexander VI. *was* Pope. And Savonarola *was* excommunicated by him. And though superstition of a very grovelling kind, rather than any process of logical consideration, was the influencing force that led the Florentine mind, the fact of his excommunication was telling against him in Florence. His followers were becoming less numerous in the city; and the contemners of his teaching more bold. To large numbers of the citizens "it appeared a very serious matter, and inconsistent with the character of a good Christian to disobey the Pope." * And these signs of the times were not lost on the Friar's enemies in the city. A number of dissipated and violent-tempered young men of the patrician class, with that strong feeling of orthodoxy and zeal for "the character of a good Christian," which has so often been observed to animate similar portions of society under analogous circumstances, formed themselves into an association, called the "Compagnacci," of which one Dolfo Spini was the leader; and the object of which was to sup together frequently for the support of true religion, and concert every possible means of helping to put down the excommunicated Friar by

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 167.

hectoring and intimidation. Every body, says the historian, lived in fear of these violent roystering "companions;" so much so, that even sober steady-going Paolo Antonio Sodarini, himself a noted and vehement Piagnone, caused his son Tommaso to become a member of their body, as a wise measure of precaution, in order that if things so turned out, as to make it desirable, he might in the hour of need find the advantage of having made friends with the Mammon of unrighteousness; while at the same time, worthy douce man, he consulted the private interests of his own soul, by indulging his pietistic leanings in favour of the Friar. All this time, moreover, nothing had been done towards the recovery of Pisa; nor were the prospects of the Commonwealth cheering in that quarter. The French King did not come. The promised execution of wrath and vengeance on the enemies of Florence in general, and of the Frateschi in particular, was withheld. Nor did there appear any probability of a fulfilment of Savonarola's often-repeated and eagerly-treasured prophecies in this respect. A.D. 1497.

From all which causes, says Guicciardini, "Fra Jeronimo* continued to go down in the world till his extraordinary ending." In the months that followed the execution of the five citizens, however, the members of the three successive Signories, which were, as has been said, all favourable to the Friar, strove to the utmost of their power to induce the Pope to withdraw the ecclesiastical censure which had been fulminated against him. In a letter from the Signory to their agent in Rome, bearing date the 7th of November, 1497, they write with reference to this object: "It is our will that you beat on this subject, that you cry, and importune, urge in every possible manner,

* The name is sometimes written thus, and sometimes Fra Girolamo, by the contemporary historians.

A.D. 1498. and cease not, nor spare any labour for the attainment of this result." *

But it was all in vain. Not only was it impossible to get Alexander to recal the censures, but all the other interests of the Republic with the court of Rome, such as the urgently needed permission to lay a tax on Florentine ecclesiastical property, were at a standstill, because the Pope absolutely refused to listen to the envoys of the Commonwealth on any subject till Savonarola should have been delivered into his hands. And to this the Signory, consulting, as Florentines almost invariably did throughout the course of their history, their municipal rights and independence and their feelings as citizens before their duties and sympathies as Catholics, could not and would not concede.

And thus matters continued till the Christmas of that year. Savonarola had at that time been silent six months; and he himself, as well as his supporters, who saw his and their credit visibly declining in the city, became too impatient of so disastrous a state of things to tolerate it longer. On Christmas-day Savonarola, in open defiance of the excommunication, celebrated mass in St. Mark's, and administered the communion to all his friars, and to a large number of his lay disciples. The latter having obtained the consent of the favourable Signory, caused the usual preparations of pulpit and benches to be made in the nave of the cathedral, and going to Savonarola in a body, besought him to recommence his sermons. And he, who as his biographer says, had little need of incitement, promised that he would preach there on Sunday the 11th of February, 1498. The tidings that this was to be done caused extreme excitement in the city. The Archbishop, Messer Lionardo de' Medici, issued the most

* Letter quoted by Villari, Vita di Sav., vol. ii. p. 56.

stringent prohibition from attending on the promised sermon to all ecclesiastical persons; and enjoined all parish priests to warn their parishioners with the utmost urgency of the consequences of thus flying in the face of the Papal authority, assuring them, that no one who should be present at the Friar's sermon, should be admitted to the communion table, to confession, or to burial in consecrated ground. The Signory, however, made short work with this episcopal attempt to uphold the authority of the Holy See;—notifying to the Archbishop, that unless he withdrew his prohibitions and threats within two hours, he should be pronounced an outlaw. A.D. 1498.

So the sermon took place as announced, and was attended by a very large audience. The preacher plunged at once into the question of the validity of the excommunication, using a series of arguments, reported at length by his biographer, of which it is sufficient to remark, that they manifestly, to the apprehension of the merest tyro in such matters, land the enquirer in full Protestantism. When the authority appointed by God severs himself from Him, he is then but a broken tool, and is no longer entitled to our obedience. But you will ask me, says the preacher, how I am to know that such is the case;—thus hitting the one great nail accurately on the head; but utterly failing, as he needs must have failed, to get any available solution of his question by the reply, that this fact is to be known by observing whether the laws and commands of the authority in question are "contrary to that which is the principle and the root of all wisdom, that is to say, a godly life and charity;"—a *petitio principii*, the puerility of which is such, that it is difficult to imagine that such a man as Savonarola could have been himself the dupe of it.

In the following passage indeed we find him, not only going the whole length of the extremest individual Pro-

A.D. 1498. testantism, but setting forth that mystic "law-unto-themselves" doctrine, which has in all ages been found so dangerous a tool in the hands of fanaticism. "Our perfection," he says,* "does not consist in faith or in the law, but in charity. And he alone who possesses this knows that which is necessary to salvation," "whoever, therefore," he proceeds, "shall command anything contrary to charity, which is the fullness of our law, let him be anathema. Ay, if it were an angel who said it, if all the saints, and the Virgin Mary (which certainly is not possible), were to say it, let them be anathematized. If any law, or canon, or Council † should say it, let them be anathematized. And if any Pope has ever spoken in contradiction to what I am now saying, let him be excommunicated. I do not assert that there ever has been such; but if there were, he was no longer an instrument of the Lord—he was a mere broken tool."

"Some among you are afraid," he continues, "that although this excommunication may be null in the sight of God, yet it may be valid in the eye of the Church. *For me it is sufficient, that I am not bound by it, but by Christ.* Oh! my God, if ever I cause myself to be absolved from this excommunication, send me into hell! ‡ oh, Father! And there are even friars, who speaking of this excommunication, maintain that it is valid, and that they cannot give me absolution. Shall I tell you how absolution may be obtained? Ah! it were better for me to be silent. But I will say thus much to you. This is the way!" And here the preacher struck two keys together, in such a manner as to imitate the chink of money, thus

* Villari, vol. ii. p. 77.

† It is observable that Savonarola here abandons the usual subterfuge of would-be Catholics, who, when it is inconvenient to them to obey the Pope, appeal to a future Council as the real seat of the infallibility of the Church.

‡ "Mandami all' Inferno."

indicating the means by which absolution or anything else might be had from the pastors of the Church in that day. A.D. 1498.

I think that a better Pope than Alexander VI. might have felt that it was necessary to silence such a preacher as this;—that any Pope whatever, indeed, must have felt himself and his Popedom to be altogether incompatible with such doctrine.

But what about the wrath to come, that was to overwhelm the false Pope and the other enemies of the preacher and his friends? Was it to be supposed that heaven would permit evil to triumph over good, and the simoniacal and infamous Pontiff to put down the prophet and his work? Had not Savonarola again and again declared that this would not happen? He had ventured to foretell that the fulmination of the excommunication against him would not be permitted. And it is very curious, and painfully instructive to mark how the one false step, which first took him across the boundary line that separates the natural from the supernatural, and teaching from prophecy, involves him in the fatal necessity of what must be called equivocation.

"I reply to you," he says to his congregation, in answer to anticipated objections on the score of the non-fulfilment of prophecies on this head,—"I reply that the excommunication has not entirely come, and that therefore you have not yet seen all." (He was alluding to the fact that the Papal bull had not been published in Florence in all due form; though it had been fulminated with sufficient efficacy, as we have seen, to compel his obedience to it for six months.) "But you have seen," he continued in a strain which it must still grievously pain all the admirers of so great a man to listen to,—"you have seen how a certain person at Rome has lost his son;" (alluding to the death of the Pope's son, the Duke of Candia;) "and you

A.D. 1498. have seen the deaths of certain others here," (alluding to Del Nero, and the other four,) "who will go to hell, and you will see the proceedings of the tribunals in their case;" (not yet made public). "As yet," he continued, in the true tone of conscious charlatanism, "I have not been driven to have recourse to miracle. But in his own time the Lord will stretch out his hand. And you have already seen so many signs, that you have no need of miracles."

The learned biographer and eloquent advocate of Savonarola, of whose thorough knowledge of this period of Italian history I have so frequently availed myself, is anxious to point out to his readers that Savonarola did not intend to lay claim to any power of working miracles; but was entirely sincere and whole-hearted in the perfect conviction that God would work one, if the time should come when such an exertion of supreme power should be necessary for the protection of himself, God's servant, and his work from destruction. When in another of this series of sermons, preached in the spring of 1498, he promises his hearers that on the last day of that Carnival he would celebrate mass at St. Mark's, and give a solemn benediction in the Piazza in front of the church afterwards, and goes on to say; "I beg each of you, that when I shall stand there with the Holy Sacrament in my hand, he will pray fervently to the Lord, that if this work be not of Him, He may send a fire that shall swallow me up in hell;"—and when in another sermon he calls on God to strike him down with a thunderbolt, if he were not uttering words in accordance with the Divine Will, there cannot be the slightest doubt that he spoke in the utmost and most fervid sincerity of heart. He believed in the possibility, and indeed in the probability, of a supernatural interposition of the Divine power with an entire and unshakeable conviction. But he could not but have known that

his excuse to the people for the delay in the manifestation of this miracle, based on the quibble about the non-publication of the bull of excommunication, was a mere dilatory feint. And there is another consideration, which should be borne in mind by those who rely, in endeavouring to estimate and understand the strangely complex character of Savonarola, on the incompatibility of such habitual communion of the soul with God, and such a fervid faith in Him as the Friar possessed, with the self-conscious falsity of the charlatan. It is that the moral effect of such communion and such faith will be characterized by the nature of the conception which the creature has been able to form for himself of the Creator. Now the God of Savonarola's worship was a God who was expected to consign Pisa to Florentine domination, as a reward for the piety of the Florentines, if indeed they would be tempted by it to be pious;—who was thought to have punished a Pope for publishing an unjust excommunication by causing the death of his son, who would otherwise have lived longer;—and who might be expected to strike down into hell by sudden fire a preacher, who should not preach in accordance with the Divine Will. The question arises, how far intimate and worshipping communion of the soul with a God so figured forth, would be likely to produce that noble and lofty purity of truthfulness, to which the baleful shadow of a falsehood, let it appear to subserve whatever interest of piety or virtue it may, is an abomination and an impossibility. A.D. 1498.

On the last day of the Carnival of 1498, Savonarola celebrated mass, and gave the solemn and public benediction which he had promised; and then there was a second collection and burning of "the vanities," as in the previous year. But it was very evident, although the Signory was favourable to the Piagnoni, and the pile was duly built up and fired, that the Friar had gone down in

A.D. 1498. the world, as Guicciardini phrases it, since the last carnival that time last year. The "angels" sent round to collect "the abominations" were insulted, impeded, and ill-treated by the Compagnacci and their friends; and though the majority of the people and the Signory were still Piagnoni, and favourable to the manifestation, it was very evident that this second burning was looked on with evil eyes by a large portion of the city.

One thing, at all events, this carnival demonstration of the Piagnoni effected; and that was, to raise again to boiling heat the party hatreds in the city. The ever-increasing violence and boldness of Savonarola's latter sermons, which assuredly tended to the utter subversion of the whole fabric of the Catholic Church,* was working in the same direction. No sooner were these spirit-stirring and truly alarming discourses delivered, than they were printed and widely scattered abroad, not only in Florence, but in other parts of Italy, and even beyond the Alps. And tidings reached Florence, and Rome also, which showed that the Friar of St. Mark's was in truth raising a general outcry against the too patent scandals and corruptions of the Church, which threatened to be dangerous. Alexander was frightened, and proportionably furious against this traitor in the camp, this worm of a preaching friar, whom he had failed to crush with the first angry but contemptuous stamp of his foot, and who dared to rear his crest and hiss back curse for curse against God's Vicegerent upon earth. If ever the extinction of opposition may be tempered by mercy when effected by a church in the secure plenitude of power, neither mercy nor moderation was ever exercised by the priest of a church in danger.

* Some specimens of these startling discourses have been given; and many more at much greater length may be found in the pages of Professor Villari. They are such as to convince the reader that it must have been a struggle to the death between the indomitable Friar and Catholic authority.

The replies accordingly which came from Rome to the urgent instances of the Piagnone Signory that the Pope should recall his censures on the Friar, were far more unfavourable than a simple refusal to do so. The letters of the Signory had reached their envoys in Rome on the 6th of March, 1498; and the replies of the Florentine agents, Messer Domenico Bonsi and Messer Alessandro Braccio, are dated on the 9th of the same month. At the beginning of March, after three successive Signories of Piagnone sympathisers, a Signory decidedly hostile to the Frateschi had come into office;—a symptom of the changing current of feeling in the city. Of the new Signory, three only were favourable to the Frate. Nevertheless the new government was not disposed to yield to the demands of Pope Alexander, that Savonarola should be delivered up into his hands. And the fact is a striking proof of the degree to which Florentine municipal rights were always preferred in Florence to respect for the Church, when it came to be a question not of phrases and protestations, but of deeds. This Savonarola was in the eyes of the new Signory a dangerous firebrand, a nuisance, and, above all, a party foe. But he was, by adoption, a Florentine citizen. And the members of the Signory, hate as they might within their own walls their party enemy, and willing as they might be to mete out to him any measure of punishment or persecution, were above all and before all, as regarded the outside world, Florentine citizens. And they were not willing to abase the dignity and independence of the Commonwealth by giving up a Florentine citizen to be judged by any other mortal jurisdiction, lay or clerical. A.D. 1498.

A "pratica," or large assembly of magistrates and leading citizens, had been called especially to decide what was to be done in this matter, and to take off the shoulders of the Signory the responsibility of dealing alone with so

A.D. 1498. delicate and difficult a question. In this assembly there had not been wanting counsellors who urged on the Signory the necessity of caring in this matter "for the honour of God,"—*i.e.*, obeying the Pope. But the deliberations of the "pratica" had resulted in a determination to make one more attempt at reconciling "the honour of God" with that of the Commonwealth. It had been decided that enough would be done "for the honour of God," if the Friar were prohibited from preaching in the cathedral, and confined to his church of St. Mark. And letters were sent to Rome conveying this determination, and joining therewith those protestations of filial devotion to the Holy See which Florence was at all times ready to administer in any profusion to the Holy Father, if only they might suffice to content him.

But Alexander was too much in earnest in this matter to be contented in any such manner; and, looking to the tidings that were reaching Rome of the spreading results of the friar's preaching, he had indeed good reason to be so. The letters from Rome, therefore, which reached the Signory early in March, were sufficiently alarming. The interview between the Florentine envoys and the Pope had been a very painful and stormy one. The Holy Father manifested extreme indignation, and "wondered how the Signory could so far have forgotten what was due to him, and to themselves, as to aid and abet that contemptible reptile,* in offending the majesty of the Holy See." He once again demanded that Savonarola should be sent to Rome, there to answer the accusations of preaching false doctrine, which lay against him, and to purge himself of his contumacy. If the Signory would so send him, and if he would recant his errors, and repent, the mercy of Mother Church was still open to him; he should be re-

* "Vermicciattolo."

ceived as a repentant son, and forgiven. But if not, he, the Holy Father, was determined to use the whole of the power in his hands for the signal punishment not only of the heretic himself, but of the city which dared to shelter him. And the bull, which embodied these resolves, and which was sent to Florence, together with the letters of the Florentine agents, added to the purely spiritual menaces, which the Commonwealth, with whatever loud professions of grief and contrition, had always been able to bear without any serious inconvenience, certain other threats of a nature more calculated to touch her heart. Alexander declared that if he were not obeyed, he would confiscate all the goods of Florentine citizens then in Rome, would prohibit his subjects from all dealings with citizens of the Commonwealth, and would impose the same on other nations on pain of interdict. The envoys, too, very urgently represented to the Signory that matters were coming to a very awkward crisis. They were importuned by influential persons on all sides to bring this matter to an amicable settlement. The Florentines in Rome, they said, were placed in a very painful position. The Florentine name was suffering in Europe in consequence of this pestilent Friar. Rome was becoming even unsafe for citizens of the Republic. An attempt had been made on the life of one of the agents, Messer Domenico Bonsi himself. It was believed, however, that this had been the work of an emissary of the Medici.* A.D. 1498.

But not even these letters, delivered to a Signory hostile to Savonarola, could induce Florence to give up her citizen to be judged at Rome. Another large "pratica" was assembled, and separated without coming to any resolution. It was settled that the members should meet again on the

* Villari, Vita di Sav. vol. ii. lib. iv. ch. 6.

A.D. 1498. 17th of March. The "Proposto" of the Signory on that day, whose function it was to take the initiative in proposing any vote to the assembly, was Messer Giovanni Berlinghieri, a violent opponent of the Friar, as was also the Gonfaloniere, Pietro Popoleschi.* These two influential personages working together, succeeded at last in obtaining a vote from the "pratica" to the effect that Savonarola should be prohibited from preaching altogether. This, of course, fell very short of compliance with the Papal demands; but the letters that came back from the Pope, in reply to those sent off immediately to signify to him this decision, were full of contentment, praise of the Signory, and benignity. The tone of them, when taken in conjunction with that of the Pontiff's last missives and his imperative demands, is surprising enough, and very suggestive of the Pope's appreciation of the stiff-neckedness of the stout burghers with whom he had to deal, and of the small hope there was of inducing them to grant the whole of his demand.

Savonarola received the order of the Signory to preach no more on the evening of the 17th of March. "You come, I presume," he said to the messengers, "from your masters." "Certainly, from their lordships the Signory." "I also," returned Savonarola, "must consult *my* Lord. To-morrow I will give you my answer."†

He was to preach in the pulpit of St. Mark's on the next day; and he did so, despite the order received overnight. In that sermon on the 18th of March, 1498, the last he ever preached, Savonarola took leave of his audience, announcing to them the commands of the Signory, and his determination to obey them. "These are evil tidings for Florence," he said; "misfortunes are about to fall on her!

* Popoleschi was a Medici, but had changed his family name, 1494, at the time of the banishment of his kinsmen.

† Villari, Vita di Sav. vol. ii. lib. iv. ch. 6.

Ye fear the interdict. But the Lord will send an interdict which will cause the wicked to lose both goods and life." A.D. 1498.

Still we have the same menaces of temporal punishments on his enemies, the same appeal to the temporal terrors of his hearers, and probably the sincere conviction that the miracle which was needed for the triumph of the good cause,—namely puritanism, and democracy within the walls of Florence, and the destruction of the liberty of Pisa, its subjection to the Florentines, and the downfall of the wicked and simoniacal Pope abroad,—would, though the wheels of the Lord's chariot tarried, be forthcoming at last.

In the meantime, however, while waiting for this expected manifestation of the divine power, Savonarola did not neglect to make every preparation for fighting the battle to the death which lay before him, by such means as he had in his power. For some time past there had been question of summoning a council of the Church for the judging and deposing of the simoniacal Pontiff. The Cardinal della Rovere, Alexander's implacable enemy, who had been defeated by him in his hopes of the Papacy by the unscrupulous use of the Borgian wealth, and who, in the event of Alexander's deposition, would in all likelihood be his successor* in the chair of St. Peter, was eager in promoting this scheme. Charles of France was well inclined to it, but, as always, hesitated and delayed. Savonarola, therefore, set himself earnestly to the work of causing the calling of a General Council. He wrote letters to all the principal sovereigns of Europe, setting forth with all his power of eloquence and argument the deplorable condition of the Church, and the absolute and pressing need of taking the only step by which these evils could be re-

* Della Rovere was not immediately the successor of Alexander VI., but he became pope as Julius II. after the few months' papacy of Pius III., who immediately succeeded Alexander.

A.D. 1498. medied. His main hope, however, was still in Charles VIII. And before sending the letters which he had already prepared to the other sovereigns, he addressed to him a special epistle urging him by every consideration, religious as well as political, to lose no time in taking the foremost step in this great and meritorious work. But unfortunately, instead of the anxiously expected answer to this exhortation, news came back to Florence that the messenger entrusted with it had been arrested on his way to France by agents of Ludovico il Moro, and the papers he carried taken from him. Of course the swarthy Ludovick lost not a moment in sending the important letter that had thus fallen into his hands to his friend the Pope; and the fury of the latter on reading it, and thus becoming aware of the audacious machinations of the no longer contemptible, but only too formidable "reptile," whom he had failed to crush, may be easily imagined.

But while the storm was thus gathering around the Friar abroad, an incident occurred within the walls of the city which contributed much to advance the story of Savonarola to the end towards which it was very visibly tending.

Of course, during the period of the great Dominican's culminating ascendancy, the rival friars of the other orders, especially of that of St. Francis, had been bitterly hostile to him. Trading jealousy had been quite potent enough to make this inevitable. But now when his star was evidently declining, when he had placed himself in flagrant opposition to the powers which were, when not only the pride of their own order was to be gratified by assisting in running him to the death, but credit in the highest quarters to be gained by such timely adherence to the cause of authority, of course the friars of St. Francis were animated with a more burning zeal than ever for the confounding and putting down of so audacious a Dominican

heretic. Now there was a certain Franciscan friar, Francesco di Puglia by name, who had some time previously, in the excess of his zeal, challenged Savonarola's friend and disciple, Frà Domenico, to put their several pretensions to the proof by both of them voluntarily entering a burning pile, that it might be seen which of them would be miraculously preserved from the fire, in divine attestation of the purity of their faith and doctrine! This had happened at Prato, where Frà Domenico chanced to be at the time. He had eagerly and confidently accepted the challenge. But no sooner had he done so than his adversary was as eager to back out of his imprudent proposal, and contrived to do so under the pretence of being recalled to Florence by his superiors. This had taken place in the previous year, and the incident had passed off without further results. But now the aspect of the city becoming day by day more hostile to Savonarola, encouraged this Franciscan friar, preaching in Santa Croce, the church of his order, to renew his challenge. Upon which, Frà Domenico, like a war-horse at the sound of the trumpet, started forward again to accept the gage, declaring himself ready to enter the fire in support of the celebrated three positions of his friend and master. A.D. 1498.

These three dicta of Savonarola ran thus, as may be remembered—

1*st*. The Church of God needs renovation. It shall be scourged, and shall be renewed.

2*nd*. Florence also, after she shall have been scourged, shall be restored, and shall prosper.

3*rd*. The unbelievers shall be convèrted to Christ.

To these three famous propositions the zealous disciple appended, "And all these things shall happen in our days; and the excommunication recently fulminated against the very reverend father, Friar Girolamo, is null. And those who do not obey it do not sin."

A.D. 1498. In support of these theses, Frà Domenico, preaching at St. Mark's, declared himself willing to enter the fire, accompanied by his opponent, leaving the truth of them to be proved by the miraculous preservation of himself, or their falsehood shown by that of his adversary. The Franciscan, however, when he found his old antagonist so thoroughly in earnest, became again anxious to back out of his challenge. And as Savonarola by no means approved of any such ordeal, but on the contrary severely admonished Frà Domenico for the indiscretion of his zeal, the Franciscan declaring loudly that his challenge had been to Savonarola himself, and that he wanted to have nothing to say to Frà Domenico, was glad enough at the prospect of thus escaping; and the matter might have had no further consequences if it had been left to the settlement of the friars.

But there were men in Florence to whom the proposed ordeal offered far too valuable an opportunity for the accomplishment of their designs for it to be allowed to drop in this manner. The challenge and the acceptance of it had been public; and though the "Compagnacci" were not likely to be very assiduous frequenters of sermons, the matter had become too much a topic of public talk for it to fail in reaching their ears. The declaration of the Franciscan, that his challenge was addressed to Savonarola himself, was to them the most valuable point in the matter. If Savonarola should enter the fire, they argued, he will assuredly be burned; and if he refuse to do so, we shall be able to make of his refusal a strong handle against him with the people. So the Compagnacci, at one of their revels, determined that this promising idea of the Franciscan friar must not in any case be allowed to fall to the ground.

But it was found to be very difficult to induce the frightened Franciscan to stand to his imprudent challenge.

He was exceedingly eager to be quit of the matter, and thought he saw the means of being so, by adhering firmly to his declaration that his challenge was addressed to Savonarola himself, and that he would have nothing to do with Frà Domenico. In vain he was assured that no harm should happen to him;—that the only object was to cause a disturbance, under cover of which it would be easy to find an opportunity of killing Savonarola;—that when the thing came to the point they—the Compagnacci—would find means of causing the whole matter to be broken off. It was impossible to bring the poor caitiff's courage to the sticking point; and the utmost that could be obtained from him was a regularly signed document, in which he declared that he was ready to enter the fire in company with Savonarola, if the Dominican Prior would venture on the ordeal. A.D. 1498.

It would seem, that the unhappy wretch placed an implicit confidence in the common sense of Savonarola, which he deemed would assuredly prevent him from attempting any such absurdity. Of course he had no belief whatever that either he or his opponent would escape the entirely natural consequences of entering a burning pile if either should be fool-hardy enough to do so. And he did not doubt that such a man as Savonarola was equally well persuaded of this certainty. Frà Domenico he regarded as an addle-brained enthusiast, who perhaps believing through insane fanaticism, or perhaps willing to sacrifice his life in the cause of his Prior and his order, would absolutely be mad enough to carry out the terrible farce in earnest. But acting under the urgent instances of the Compagnacci, with Dolfo Spini at their head, Frà Francesco succeeded in persuading an unfortunate wretch, one Frà Giuliano Rondinelli, a friar in his own convent, to declare that he was ready to go into the fire with Frà Domenico. This poor man also, when it came to the

A.D. 1498. push, strove hard to escape from the task proposed to him, and from the hands of the cruel friends who were urging him to it. But at last he was induced to sign the challenge in due form, declaring at the same time, poor wretch, "that he well knew he should be burned; but that he did it for the salvation of souls."* And thereupon another friar, on the part of the Dominicans of St. Mark, one Frà Mariano degli Ughi, came forward, who also signed the challenge, and intimated his readiness to enter the fire.

Now, it cannot but be observed that this circumstance throws much doubt, nay, may be considered to contradict, the assertion that Savonarola consistently set his face against this proposed terrible, and yet absurd project of the ordeal by fire. It may be true that he had blamed the over-hot zeal of Frà Domenico, which had caused all the mischief by first taking up the absurd challenge of the Franciscan. But it cannot be believed for an instant that the Prior of St. Mark's, and that Prior, Savonarola, could not have prevented, had he so chosen, this second of his flock from coming forward to facilitate the arrangement of the scheme, when it had reached the degree of publicity and importance it had now assumed. Besides, it may be remarked that the whole of the conduct of the Compagnacci in the matter, assumed the certainty that Savonarola would at least be present at the ordeal, which was to take place in the *Piazza della Signoria*. Their whole object in promoting this monstrous farce, was to create an opportunity for laying hands on Savonarola. This was no easy matter to accomplish; so jealously had he for a long time past been guarded by his friends, and so well was it known, that he could not appear in the streets without danger to his life. The hope of the "Compagnacci" was, that if happily he could be goaded

* Villari, Vita di Sav., lib. iv. chap. vii. vol. ii. p. 118.

into trying the miracle, he would perish in the flames; and that failing this the matter might be made to end in a tumult, under cover of which their enemy might be murdered. But this of course assumed his presence on the Piazza. A.D. 1498.

Furthermore, this consideration cannot fail to suggest itself to those who read the whole account of Savonarola's conduct and preaching with attention. Supposing him to have been entirely sincere in all his professions of expecting all needful miraculous interposition in his favour, could he have doubted that it would be manifested, when not only the life of his foremost disciple was at stake, but when, in the face of all Europe, the acceptation or rejection of his teaching was to depend on the issue of this appeal to Heaven? Surely, if Savonarola wholly believed all that he had ever said, he must have expected that this ordeal would not be permitted to end in his confutation and destruction. And Professor Villari * accordingly, has no doubt that his hero fully anticipated a triumphant ending of the ordeal. But why, then, should the Friar have been anxious, as he unquestionably was, to avoid the trial?

It may also be observed here that Professor Villari, in his very full and lucid account of this lamentable and disgraceful incident, does not, as it appears to me, quite satisfactorily make out his position that the Signory, as such, took part with the "Compagnacci" in urging on the trial by fire. It is undoubtedly clear that it could not have taken place without their permission; and it is certain that a large "Pratica" was assembled to decide on the question whether it should be permitted or not,—a circumstance which in itself would seem to indicate that the Signory were not eagerly bent on pushing it on. For

* Vita di Sav., vol. ii. p. 120.

A.D. 1498. had they been so, it was competent to them to allow it, without calling a "Pratica" to deliberate on the question. In this "Pratica" there were not wanting citizens of sense and courage enough to raise their voices against the proposed wickedness. They were not friends of the Friar who spoke thus; but simply men of sense, anxious to save their city from such a disgraceful exhibition.

But passion and party hatred ran far too high for the voice of moderation, or even of common sense, to be heard. And all the city, with the exception of the very few who really loved Florence better than their party, were now anxious that the experiment should take place. The Pope was eager for it, as may easily be imagined. The Signory were at all events favourable to it. The "Arrabbiati" and the "Compagnacci" were determined not to lose so excellent a chance of, at length, in one way or the other, compassing the destruction of their great enemy. The "Piagnoni" were at least equally desirous that the ordeal should take place; for they doubted not that it would result in the glorious and plenary triumph of their prophet, and the confusion of their adversaries. They fully expected that when the moment of trial came Savonarola would not allow his disciple and friend to enter the fiery pile alone, but would himself go in with him, and would come out from the trial triumphant and unscathed. But there was this difference between the wishes of the "Piagnoni" and those of their enemies. The former, of course, were anxious only that the experiment should be fairly and loyally made, fully trusting to supernatural aid for its successful issue. Their foes cared little whether a Franciscan friar or two were burned alive or not, so that Savonarola were burned with him. They scouted the notion of any miraculous interposition on either side; and were only anxious, that if, as they thought was most probable, none of the champions should be at the last

moment insane enough to step into the burning pile, such a disturbance should arise as should enable them to make sure of the Friar's life. A.D. 1498.

On the 1st of April Savonarola pronounced a short discourse on the subject of the ordeal in St. Mark's; and it is impossible to avoid perceiving a certain amount of inconsistency and vacillation in his words, which seem to indicate a mind perplexed and not fully decided as to the line he should take in this matter. He himself, he said, had too great a work on his hands for him to lose his time in such miserable contests * as these. But if his adversaries insisted on obliging him to submit to such a mode of deciding the goodness of his cause, and that of the reformation of the Church, then "I will in no wise hesitate to enter into the fire, and should be most certain of coming out unharmed."

But he knew very well that the conjuncture he mentioned *had* arrived;—that his adversaries *were* loudly demanding that he should seal his testimony by this proof.

He goes on to say, that the boast of the Franciscans that they were ready to lay down their lives in this cause, only went to show that they were ready to become self-murderers, "whereas we on the contrary come to the contest challenged, and compelled to accept it, because the honour of God and of the faith is compromised." It seems strange that it did not occur to him to remark, that the boast of the Franciscans that they were ready to die in the cause, contradicted their hypothesis that God would give judgment in their favour, by causing them to come out from the ordeal unhurt. And this may be deemed another evidence of the perturbed state of his mind, and the absence of logical clearness in his view of the monstrous absurdity proposed alike by his friends and his enemies.

* "Miserabili contese."—Villari, vol. ii. p. 121.

A.D. 1498. "Those who shall truly feel themselves inspired by the Lord," he goes on to say, "will unquestionably come out unharmed from the flames, if the experiment shall take place, of which we are not yet certain." (1st of April.) But here again he forgets that such an assertion sets at nought the whole theory of the ordeal as held by himself as well as professed to be held by his enemies. For it was very possible, nay very probable, that both parties might "truly feel themselves inspired by the Lord;" as doubtless was the case with that poor victim Frà Marino, who protested that he went to the burning "for the salvation of souls."

Then he returns to say, that as for himself, "I reserve myself for a greater work, for which I shall always be most ready to give my life." But if it were a question of simply passing through a fire unharmed and without danger, by doing which in the meantime his work and his cause and his influence would be enormously increased, why should his doing so interfere with his reservation of himself for a greater work?

"The time will come," he continues, "when the Lord will manifest supernatural signs; but that time assuredly cannot be fixed at will and choice of any man. For the present it is sufficient that it should be seen, that by sending to the ordeal some one of our friars, we equally expose ourselves to the anger of the people, in case the Lord should not cause him to come out unharmed from the flames."

It must not be imagined that it has been intended in the foregoing remarks to insinuate that Savonarola was not willing and ready to give his life for the promotion of the work he had in hand. He must have known that the course he was pursuing placed his life in imminent and daily danger. But it seems to me that the strangely illogical and contradictory utterances that have been cited, show decisively enough that the mind of Savonarola was not clear and entire

in this matter. He disapproves of this ordeal, yet professes his perfect conviction of its entire efficacy for the sure and satisfactory solution of the all-important question which it was devised to decide. He declares his readiness to enter the fire, if a certain case should arise, which he well knew had arisen; and yet, at the same time, protests that he will do nothing of the sort! A.D. 1498.

Are we compelled to impute to Savonarola, in reviving this painful incident of his story, such a want of belief in his own emphatic assertions, as rendered him anxious to avoid this proposed test, if he could find the means of doing so, without compromising his reputation; and impelled him, failing this more desirable issue of the affair, to prefer that a subordinate should make the terrible attempt in place of himself? Or will it be sufficient to attribute his vacillations and contradictions to that obscuration of intellect, produced by the too close contact of the mind with the monster-peopled cloud-world of supernaturalism, which unceasingly protested against, as it is, by the everlasting fundamental laws of our nature, has dimmed and distorted so many an intelligence as bright and powerful as his?

At last the 6th of April was appointed for the execution of the ordeal; and it was finally determined that Frà Domenico on the part of St. Mark, and Frà Giuliano Rondinelli on the part of the Franciscans, were to be the two champions. But on the evening of the 5th, the Signoria sent a message to St. Mark's to say that the experiment was to be put off till the 7th. And there is evidence, which goes to show that the object of the Signory in this delay, was to give time for the arrival of a brief from Rome, which they hoped might forbid the execution of the project. For it would seem, that at the last hour the government had misgivings, and was afraid of the responsibility it was about to assume.

A.D. 1498. But no such brief came; the city was greedily impatient for the new and exciting spectacle; and there was no further excuse for delay.

The all but notorious intentions of the "Compagnacci," on the one hand, and suspicions of foul play on the other, made it abundantly necessary for either party to take all the means it could to provide for the presence on the scene of action of an amount of armed force, sufficient for attack on the one hand, and for defence on the other. The *Piazza* therefore was occupied by a force of five hundred soldiers in the pay of the Signory, under the command of Giovacchino della Vecchia; by five hundred armed ruffians in the pay of the "Compagnacci," under the orders of Dolfo Spini; and by three hundred faithful followers of the Frate, commanded by Marcuccio Salviati. The openings of the streets leading into the Piazza were all closed; and every possible inch of vantage ground, and the windows and roofs of the houses, were thickly crowded with the populace anxious for the promised sight.

The magnificent *Loggia de Lonzi* in the *Piazza*, was divided in half by a boarding; and the half of it nearest the palace assigned to the Dominicans, and the other half to their rivals and enemies the Franciscans. Savonarola had spent the morning in administering the sacrament to his friars, and in pronouncing another short discourse to the people, mainly women (for the men were in the *Piazza*;) who thronged the church of St. Mark. While he was yet thus engaged, the mace-bearers of the Signory arrived to announce that all was ready in the *Piazza*.

Forthwith the Dominicans, to the number of about two hundred, formed themselves into procession, with the champion of the day, Frà Domenico, at the head of them, supported by two of his companions, who had been anxious to share his enterprise, and dressed in a crimson velvet cape, with a long cross in his hands. Behind him walked

Savonarola, clothed in white, and carrying the Host. A.D. 1498.
Thus arranged, the procession took its way to the *Piazza*, chanting aloud as they went the psalm, "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered." They reached the *Piazza* about midday, and paced two by two through the hedge of armed men into the open space, and into the gaze of the eager and curious thousands who had been waiting for them there since early morning. They crossed the *Piazza*, and took up their station in the part of the *Loggia* allotted to them. Immediately in front of the *Loggia* was drawn up the armed band of their friends under Salviati; the soldiers of the Signory were distributed around the *Piazza* to keep order and close the openings of the streets, according to ancient custom on all occasions of public doings in the great square; and the Compagnacci were drawn up under the over-hanging *Tetto de' Pisani*, that building opposite to the *Palazzo*, so called because it had been built by the forced labour of Pisan prisoners, which in recent times has been the seat of the Post Office.

Immediately in front of the *Loggia*, and extending lengthwise for forty *braccia*—about seventy-six feet—between the gate of the palace and the *Tetto de' Pisani*, was the pile. It consisted of a platform of the length stated, nearly ten feet wide, and raised about four feet from the ground, and paved with brick. On this large masses of faggots were so disposed along the entire length as to leave an opening at either end, and a free passage about two feet wide in the middle. The wood was copiously sprinkled with oil and resinous matters to ensure the fierceness of the fire. And the mode of ordeal fixed on was this:—When the fire should have enveloped the mass the champions were to enter at the opening nearest to the palace, and proceed to the further end; and the entrance was to be immediately closed by fire behind

A.D. 1498. them;—an arrangement which had been adopted at the express insistance of Savonarola, to prevent the possibility of either champion suddenly turning back, and leaving his companion in the flames;—another trait which seems to impeach the firmness of the prophet's faith in the certainty of the Divine interposition.

And now all was ready, and the populace were becoming very impatient for the beginning of the spectacle. Frà Domenico and his friends, for their part, were no less eager. But neither Frà Giuliano nor his prompter and backer, Frà Francesco da Puglia, had yet appeared among their companions in their half of the *Loggia*. They were still lingering in earnest colloquy with the Signory in the palace.

Still the Dominicans waited, and the people became more and more impatient.

Savonarola at last publicly called on the Signory and the Franciscans to allow the experiment to begin, and not to detain the fasting people longer in waiting. The Franciscans, thus hard pushed, then began to put forward all sorts of objections and difficulties. First they said that the red velvet cope of Frà Domenico might, for all they knew, have been so enchanted by the spells of Savonarola, that the wearer of it would be thus unfairly preserved in the fire. Frà Domenico and Savonarola replied, that in the instrument by which the condition of the ordeal had been regulated it was expressly stated that they (the Dominicans) abjured all incantations, not believing in them; but they left full power to their opponents to avail themselves of any such, if they could. Nevertheless, in order to obviate any difficulty on this ground, Frà Domenico agreed to take off his red cope. The Franciscans then alleged that his other garments might be equally enchanted. And to meet this difficulty also, it was settled that he should change dresses with any one of

his companions. When this had been done, they insisted that he should not stand near Savonarola, for fear that great magician should renew his spells; and Frà Domenico accordingly placed himself amid the Franciscan friars in their half of the *Loggia*. Of course what was really hoped from this move was that the champion of St. Mark might fail in his constancy and faith, when thus removed from the more unquestionable spell of Savonarola's influence over his disciples. A.D. 1498.

All this time the Franciscan champion had not appeared; but remained, together with his supporter Frà Francesco, in the *Palazzo Pubblico;* and thence sent out a message, at this point of the proceedings, to demand another conference with the Signory.

But on this the patience of the multitude began very perceptibly to be exhausted. A deep murmur ran round the crowded sides of the *Piazza;* and seditious and menacing cries, increasing every moment, began to be raised in all parts of it. And this was precisely what the Compagnacci were waiting for. One of their party, taking advantage of the popular discontent, succeeded in beginning a disturbance, which very quickly became general; and in a moment the entire *Piazza* was filled with confusion and tumult. The populace shut in by the soldiers, who guarded all the outlets from the square, made a rush towards the palace; and the "Arrabbiati," seizing the opportunity, dashed forwards towards the *Loggia* in the hope of getting possession of Savonarola's person. But Marcuccio Salviati, and the stalwart burghers under his command, formed themselves in a serried line in front of that part of the *Loggia* in which the Dominicans were stationed; and Salviati, drawing a line on the ground with his sword, cried aloud, "that the man who crossed it should try the metal of Marcuccio Salviati's arms." And his voice and attitude was such, say the old biogra-

A.D. 1498. phers of the Friar, that no man was disposed to advance. At the same time the soldiers of the Signory, being foreigners, and understanding little or nothing of the objects and passions that were producing the disturbance, but seeing the populace rushing towards the palace, drove them vigorously back to their places around the *Piazza*.

Comparative calm having thus been restored, and the attempt of the Compagnacci having been baffled, the people returned to their attitude of eager expectation, and the Signory were at their wits end to know how to bring the matter to a conclusion. At that moment a sudden and heavy shower of rain, with much thunder and lightning, came on; and there was room to hope that this might be the means of sending the people to their homes, and furnishing a pretext for carrying on the wretched business in hand no further. But the populace were too much excited, and too eager for the promised spectacle, to be baulked of it by a thunder-shower. They remained to a man in their places; and in a short time the rain ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

All this time the Franciscan friar had never once dared to come out of the *Palazzo Pubblico*. But his friends began once again to put forward newly-invented difficulties. The next was a particularly well-imagined objection; because it at once gave rise to a scholastic dispute, which promised to occupy any quantity of time the disputants might choose to spend on it. The crucifix which Frà Domenico carried having been objected to, he had relinquished it, and said that he would enter the burning pile with the Host in his hands. Thereupon a terrible outcry was raised by the Franciscans, that the impious wretch was minded to cause the Holy Elements to perish in the fire with him. And Savonarola and his disciple, instead of simply giving up the notion of carrying the Host into the flames, fell into the temptation of opening

a learned discussion on the subject. In any case, they maintained, the accidents only of the sacrament would be destroyed by the fire; the essential substance thereof would remain untouched. And they cited many learned writers in support of this view. Of course their adversaries were only too happy to commence a battle on this ground, which promised to put off the execution of the dreaded ordeal indefinitely. And the Signory, taking advantage of this, sent a message, while the disputants were still in hot argument, to declare that the experiment of the fire could not be allowed to take place. A.D. 1498.

Thereupon the indignation and rage of the baulked and disappointed populace knew no bounds. And all parties were equally disappointed and equally angry. No one of them had succeeded in its special aims and wishes. The "Arrabbiati" and "Compagnacci" had failed to accomplish the murder of Savonarola. The "Piagnoni" had failed to attain that triumphant vindication of the truth of their prophet's doctrine and heavenly mission which they had so confidently anticipated. All alike, after hours of expectant waiting, fasting, and drenched by the rain, had been baulked of the exciting spectacle to which they had looked forward with such intense curiosity and interest. All alike, believing friends as well as scoffing foes, poured forth the phials of their wrath upon the unhappy prophet. The hostile Signory declared, and spread about with unblushing effrontery the lie, that Savonarola's fears had prevented the execution of the ordeal, and that consequently his character as a charlatan and impostor was no longer doubtful. The false Franciscans went about the city boasting of victory with a brazen-faced audacity that took its cue from the shameless falsehoods of their superiors. And—cruellest cut of all,—the disappointed "Piagnoni" were loud in their denunciations of their prophet's failure to achieve the full and glorious victory which he had

A.D. 1498. promised them. And why, they asked, had he thus failed? There was the assembled city in eager expectation of the test. There were the enemies ready to be confounded. There was the pile only waiting for the torch. Why had Savonarola not entered it? Why not have entered the flames alone, if need were? What mattered it that the wretched Franciscan, the miserable dupe and tool of others, were burned, or whether he escaped by a tergiversation which equally gave their side the victory, if only their prophet had known how to seize it? Ay! why did not Savonarola step alone into the fire, and perform the miracle he had announced as certain to follow? *

Yes! this was the cruellest cut of all to the prophet's heart in that hour of humiliation;—cruel with the hungry cruelty of a spectacle-loving populace on the seats of a gladiatorial arena, superadded to the cruelty of a baulked and humiliated faction!

But were the "Piagnoni" altogether wrong or unreasonable in their arguments? Savonarola had loudly and most emphatically asserted that those who should enter that fire in the spirit of undoubting faith and believe in the righteousness of the cause to which they claimed the testimony of Heaven, would undoubtedly come out therefrom unharmed. Could it be supposed that the burning of a miserable friar was necessary to the performance of this miracle? Would Savonarola have been burned because the other was *not* burned? What was wanted for the definitive triumph of his and their cause was not the burning of the Franciscan, but the miracle,—

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. chap. xvi.; Guicciardini, Storia d'Italia, lib. iii. chap. vi; Nardi, Istorie di Firenze, ed. Firenze, 1842, vol. i. pp. 141 *et seq.*; Giovanni Cambi, Istorie Deliz. degli Erudit. Tosc. vol. xxi. pp. 115 *et seq.*; Burlamacchi, Vita di Savonarola; Villari, Vita di Sav., lib. iv. chap vii.

the promised miracle! Why had the prophet failed to perform it? A.D. 1498.

These were the murmurings and cries which, with angrily expressed misgiving among the more seriously religious, and with loud taunts among the more political adherents of the party, were rife among the crowd that filled the streets, as Savonarola, escorted and protected by the faithful band of armed disciples under Marcuccio Salviati, returned to St. Mark's. It was a bitter, bitter hour for Savonarola, perhaps the most bitter he had ever yet known in a life that had seen much of bitterness;—an hour—and but the first of many even now coming upon him—of retribution for that first false step in the fatal path of supernatural pretension, which had by the tendency of a slippery and almost irresistible slope led him to his present position. It is true that the character of prophet had in the first instance been almost thrust upon him;—true also, doubtless, that the utterances which welled up hot from the spiritual depths of his own fervid soul were at first but the expressions of his own illimitable conviction that his word and his work were of God, and that God in His own time and His own way would not suffer that work to fall to the ground;—true further that these had, in falling on the duller and more earthy minds of his hearers, and mingling with the gross superstitious elements there, caused the deposition in them of a poisonous precipitate of direct material prophecy and miraculous promise, very different in its nature from the exalted but more vague result of the seer's own communion with the Infinite.

But alas! power—worldly, practical power—had come with this degradation of the sublime faith of a noble soul to the boastingly promised wonders of a charlatan. Alas! the seer was also a politician and the head of a faction. And the "recovery of Pisa" was obliged to hold a fore-

A.D. 1498. most place in God's programme for the providential governance of the world.

Yes! that hour of humiliation was an hour of retribution also;—of retribution, as ever, necessary, normal, righteous, inevitable.

Did the afflicted prophet in any degree recognise it as such? Were the reproaches of his followers the worst that Savonarola had to listen to that day? Or did the still small voice whisper, that the necessity of the circumstances, expediency, righteousness of wish and of motive had prevailed to cause the tempted tongue to utter more than the convictions of the soul could warrant? Each reader must for himself judge,—or forbear to judge—how far any such miserable consciousness admonished Savonarola in the hour of his agony,—that for him the judgment which had fallen on him was a righteous one.

CHAPTER VI.

Injury done to Savonarola by the proposal of the ordeal—Lives of "Piagnoni" not safe in the streets—Proposal of the "Frateschi" party to take up arms—rejected by Francesco Valori—His character—Sunday, the 8th April, 1498, in Florence—Savonarola preaches, despite the commands of the Signory—His last sermon—Sermon by Frà Mariano degli Ughi at the cathedral—Disturbances in the city—Attack by the mob on the Convent of St. Mark—Defence by the monks—Francesco Valori escapes from the convent—Is killed by the mob near his own house—His wife also murdered—Infamous conduct of the Signory—The mob break into the convent—Frà Benedetto on the roof—Savonarola takes no part in the fighting—Anecdotes of the fighting in the church—Illegal proceeding of the Signory—The church doors fired—Frà Enrico il Tedesco—Savonarola leads the monks to the library—His exhortations to them—Order sent by the Signory for the arrest of Savonarola—Frà Malatesta Sacromoro plays the part of Judas—Savonarola, with Frà Domenico and another, arrested—Taken with difficulty through the crowd to the *Palazzo Pubblico*—Imprisoned in separate cells—Approbation of Pope Alexander; of Ludovico, Duke of Milan—News of the death of Charles VIII. of France.

THE plot of the "Arrabbiati" had failed, in so far as they had not succeeded in laying hands on Savonarola in the confusion attendant upon the scene of the ordeal and its abortive conclusion. Nevertheless this unhappy challenge, and the manner in which the "Compagnacci" had availed themselves of it, had very powerfully played their game and damaged that of their opponents. From the time of the proposed ordeal the current of the public feeling began to set strongly and unmistakably against Savonarola. Very many of those who had previously been believers in him, and political partisans as well as theological disciples, began now to doubt whether they had not

A.D. 1498. been deceived by an impostor. They could not pardon their hierophant for not having performed the miracle which all the city had congregated to witness, which he declared that he could perform, and which would have definitively silenced his and their enemies. They could not comprehend that he should have abstained from this victory on any other theory than that of his inability to achieve it.

At the same time the "Arrabbiati" and the "Compagnacci" saw the opportunity, and were prompt to seize it. The Signory were with them in feeling, and had, moreover, a special interest in getting rid by any means of so grave and perplexing a cause of difficulty and danger as Savonarola had become. If by any means,—by any accident for which they were not responsible,—this stumbling-block and cause of scandal could be removed, all the exceedingly embarrassing difficulties with Rome would be at once removed also; Pope Alexander would become the very good friend of the Commonwealth; the tax on ecclesiastical property so urgently needed for the prosecution of the war against Pisa would be conceded, and all would go well.

In this state of things it soon became clear that the comparatively few "Piagnoni," who in this season of discouragement and depression remained firm in their faith and loyal to their prophet, could not show themselves in the streets with safety to their lives.* It was proposed by some of the leading and bolder spirits of the party under these circumstances that they should not wait for the attack which their enemies were manifestly plotting against them, but should gather their strength together, and be the first to attack the enemy. There might be a hope in this manner that they would carry with them the masses

* Nardi, *loc. cit.*

of the populace, with whom the name of the Friar, as the originator and founder of the popular Great Council, was still powerful. But it was certain that no such plan would meet with the approbation of Savonarola himself. Even the introduction of arms into the Convent of St. Mark, for the defence of the building against the attack which was expected, had been managed secretly, and without his knowledge. Those leading men of the party, therefore, who were not merely political partisans, but faithful religious disciples of the prophet, wholly refused to adopt any such line of action. A.D. 1498.

And it is not without some surprise that we find that the chief of these recusants was no other than our old acquaintance Francesco Valori, assuredly not the man, judging from what we have already seen of him, who might have been expected to stand forth as the maintainer of legality, and the practiser of moderation and long-suffering. But so it was. And it must be attributed to the real influence of Savonarola upon the hearts and character of his intimate disciples, that the fiery democrat of former years, the man who had rushed at the head of the furious populace to the sack of the Medicean palace and the burning of citizens' houses, the noisy demagogue who had wrenched from a reluctant Signory the capital condemnation of the five Medicean partisans, had now become the determined advocate of peace and abstinence from bloodshed and illegal violence. But if years, and all that they had brought with them, had made Valori a wiser and a better man, they had not cancelled his past deeds in the minds of his adversaries, nor blotted out the accumulated debt of retribution which he owed to the families and friends of the men who had been beheaded, and to the whole of the Medicean party, with whom the "Arrabbiati" were now perfectly ready to combine for the destruction of the man who was equally obnoxious to both these factions.

A.D. 1498. Such debts were rarely paid save in one way in that time and country; and there is a text respecting ready handlers of the sword, the truth of which Valori, now a "Piagnone" student of holy writ, would soon have to recognize.

The morning of Sunday the 8th of April, 1498, the day following the deplorable farce of the ordeal in the *Piazza*, passed off without disturbance. But in the brooding quietude of the city there was that vague and indescribable something in the social atmosphere which portends the coming storm, as sensibly as the heavy dull stillness of a lowering sky portends a tempest. Savonarola preached that morning at St. Mark's. And it is noteworthy that in doing so he acted in opposition to his declared intention of obeying the order of the Signory, which prohibited him from entering the pulpit. Possibly this may be taken as evidence that he considered all terms to be henceforth at an end between him and them; that he foresaw that the end was near, and judged that nothing would be gained by abstaining from putting his rapidly-waning time to profit in the manner that had always been the means of his strength and the best-loved occupation of his life. His sermon was short, and full of foreboding sadness. He protested his readiness to go to the death for the good of his country and his flock; and in dismissing his congregation he appeared to speak as if conscious that he was addressing them for the last time.* If such, indeed, were his presentiment, it was justified by the event.

In the afternoon numbers of the "Piagnoni," after attending vespers at St. Mark's, proceeded to the cathedral, where one of Savonarola's friars, Frà Mariano degli Ughi, one of those who had been an anxious candidate for the honour of entering the fire with Frà Domenico, was to preach that evening. They found the nave of the vast

* Villari, Vita di Sav., lib. iv. chap. viii.; Nardi, *loc. cit.*

church already occupied by a great number of people, evidently expecting that something very different from a sermon was about to happen. And in the space in front of the church there were grouped large bodies of the "Arrabbiati." From insulting gibes and throwing of stones to the drawing of swords from their scabbards, the passage was easy and quick. And the first sword-gleam was to the excited city as the setting of a match to gunpowder. In the twinkling of an eye the tumult spread and enveloped the entire city. The "Piagnoni" rushed to their houses to arm themselves, but when they returned into the streets they found that bodies of the "Compagnacci" had taken up positions, and made themselves masters of the corners of the streets and most commanding spots of vantage. Already among a vast multitude who had assembled in the central Piazza cries were heard, "To St. Mark's! To St. Mark's! Fire to St. Mark's!"* A.D. 1498.

And the infuriated crowd rushed thither at the words, killing by the way two or three unhappy "Piagnoni" who had the misfortune to fall into their hands. At the convent the church was still full of those, chiefly women, who had remained there in prayer after the vespers. But a sudden torrent of stones thrown in among the congregation by the foremost of the crowd gave notice that the raging mob was at hand; and amid the shrieks of the women the place was emptied in a few minutes; and the body of the rioters, when they reached the convent, found every ingress shut and barred.

There remained a small body, not more than thirty it would seem from the most trustworthy accounts,† of firm

* "Assamarcho, assamarcho col fuocho," as old Giovanni Cambi says in his strange manner, writing exactly as the populace of his time, and it must be supposed the upper classes also, pronounced the words.—Cambi, Istorie Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc. vol. xxi. p. 119.

† Villari, *loc. cit.*

A.D. 1498. and faithful friends in the convent prepared to defend it to the last. They had a few arms,—muskets, partisans, and pikes; not cannon as had been imagined by modern writers, misled by the word "artiglieria," which in that day signified any sort of fire-arm,—and with these, principally under the direction of Francesco Davanzati, who had chiefly supplied them, preparations were made for defending the walls.* But Savonarola strongly disapproved any attempt of the kind. He would have taken the crucifix in his hand and gone forth to the multitude, by whom he would assuredly have been instantly torn in pieces, saying that it was on his account alone that all these evil passions were raging; but all his family of friars got about him, and besought him not to abandon them,—nay, absolutely refused to allow him to execute his purpose.

Meanwhile some sixteen of the friars had taken up such arms as they could lay their hands on, and joined themselves to the little band of their lay defenders. But the Prior earnestly called on them to lay aside all carnal weapons, and put their trust alone in those more proper to their calling. Taking a crucifix in his hand, he headed a procession of his community around the cloister, singing as they went the "*Salvum fac populum tuum Domine;*" and most of those who had armed themselves laid aside their weapons in obedience to his behest and example.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and the crowd was still increasing in numbers and violence in the *Piazza* in front of the church, when a party of the mace-bearers of the Signory made their appearance;—with a view, it will of course be supposed, of putting down the disturbance and causing the law to be respected by the rioters;—not at all, but bringing from the Signory the

* The most trustworthy information of the amount and nature of the means for the defence of the convent which had been introduced into it, is to be found in the documents of the process against Savonarola.

almost incredible message to the convent that every inmate of it was commanded to lay down his arms. With the crowd of armed and dangerous rioters who were raging around the convent no word of interference was attempted. It was further intimated to Savonarola that sentence of exile had been passed against him, and that he was required to quit the Florentine territory within twelve hours. A.D. 1498.

Seeing how things were going, and judging that it would be impossible to hold the convent against the rioters much longer, Francesco Valori, who had hitherto been among the defenders of the building, determined, much against the advice of Davanzati, on endeavouring to effect an escape from it, in the hope of organising in the city the means of making head against the rioters. He caused himself to be let down from a window at the back of the convent, which then looked upon a large extent of garden ground, and by this means managed to escape the assailants and reached his house. But he found it already surrounded by a crowd of his enemies; and he had hardly reached the spot, when an official of the Signory came with a summons to him to present himself immediately before the board. He decided on obeying; and proceeded at once to accompany the officer to the *Palazzo Pubblico*. He imagined, says Professor Villari, that his presence and personal authority would suffice to make the members of the Signory ashamed of their scandalous conduct, and induce them to take measures for the pacification of the city. He remembered the day when his energy and influence had succeeded in controlling the Signory, and fancied that the feat might be repeated. But he omitted to calculate the difference between the momentum of a man who is sailing prosperously with the popular breeze, and one who is struggling adversely against it.

In any case he had not the opportunity of trying the effect of his eloquence on the magistrates of the Signory.

A.D. 1498. For as he traversed the crowd, with the official who had been sent to summon him by his side, he was cut down and despatched by certain members of the Ridolfi and Tornabuoni families, relatives of the men whom he had caused to be condemned in the preceding autumn.

It was but a few paces from his own house that he fell; and his wife hearing his cries mingled with those of his assassins, showed herself at the window of the house in her anxiety to see what was happening. But she had barely time to become aware of her husband's fate, before she was herself slain by a missile from the cross-bow of one in the crowd.

Then the mob rushed to the demolition and plunder of the house; and it is recorded that in the hurry and struggle incidental to the scramble for the coverings of a bed, in which an infant nephew of Valori was sleeping, the child was suffocated.* And it is further recorded that neither at the time nor ever afterwards was any inquisition made by the magistracy into any one of these murders.

Meanwhile the bands of the "Arrabbiati" continued to rage furiously around the convent; and soon after nightfall, some of the assailants succeeded in scaling the convent wall, on the side of the *Via del Maglio*. Others at the same time set fire to the doors of the convent. The whole building was thus in a few minutes in the power of the rioters. But those of the mob who were the first to penetrate within the interior parts of the convent could not resist the temptation of giving their first thoughts to plunder. They rushed to the infirmary and to the cells with this object. But the inmates were then, after their procession around the cloisters, gathered together in the choir, and occupied in prayer. In a very few minutes, however, the plunderers coming from the cells fell in with

* Burlamacchi; Nardi, *loc. cit.*; Villari, Vita di Sav., *loc. cit.*

another body, which had just made good its entrance, and joining their forces made their way to the sacristy, and from thence, breaking down the door, into the choir. A.D. 1498.

But there, forced to turn at bay, and unheeding the orders of Savonarola in the natural impulse to defend their lives, the friars made so vigorous an attack on the foremost of the mob, as they rushed through the sacristy door, striking them down with heavy crucifixes of wood and metal, and some few of the friars with the arms, which, despite the recommendations of their Prior, they had brought with them into the choir, that the rioters recoiled, and fell back on those who were still pushing on from behind. Meantime a few of the Dominicans, especially that Frà Benedetto who has left a minute account of this day's work in his life of Savonarola, had rushed up to the roof of the building, together with the small band of defenders, now much lessened in number by the desertion of many who had followed the example of Valori, and thence rained down such a storm of stones and huge tiles * on the heads of the assailants, that they were as anxious to escape from the convent as they had been to enter it. Some of the lay defenders, who had left the convent, had done so, like Valori, deeming that more good might be achieved by finding some means of restraining or quelling the fury of the mob from without. But many others had given up all hope, on hearing the message from the Signory, which has been mentioned. Nevertheless, the sudden and unexpected attack from several quarters at once, the unhallowed nature of the enterprise on which they were engaged, the unwonted and strange aspect of those cowled and white-robed fighters, with crucifixes for arms, and anathemas for war-cries, the clangour of the

* The large thick roofing tiles used to the present day in Tuscan buildings are such as to render them most formidable weapons for an attack of this sort.

A.D. 1498. great convent-bell, well known in Florence as the "Piagnona," conspired to raise a sudden panic in the invaders. And it seemed at that moment as if the friars would have succeeded in chasing the rioters from the building, and for the moment at least, making good the defence of their convent.*

All this time Savonarola, taking no part in the defence, remained on his knees in the choir, while fighting was going on around him, and the cries and groans of wounded men were filling the church. One young friar, a member of the Panciatici family, was brought into the choir, badly wounded, and laid on the steps of the altar, where, as he lay dying, Frà Domenico hurriedly administered to him the last sacraments of the Church. Another of the younger members of the community, a friar known as Enrico il Tedesco, who during the whole attack on the convent had shown that his vocation was rather to arms than to the cowl, had brought an arquebuss into the church, and taking up his place in the pulpit had done severe execution among the crowd with his deadly weapon. But still Savonarola remained absorbed in prayer.

Meanwhile night had fallen. It was becoming dark with the suddenness peculiar to a southern latitude; and there was room to hope that this circumstance, joined to the momentary discomfiture and falling back of the mob, might have saved the convent and its inmates for that night. But just at that moment a fresh message arrived from the Signory announcing an edict, to the effect that every inmate of St. Mark's, who had not left the convent within twelve hours, was *ipso facto* declared a rebel and outlaw.†

It is hardly necessary to speak of the entire illegality of

* Villari, Vita di Sav., lib. iv. chap. viii.

† *Ibid.* See the text of this decree in the Appendix to Professor Villair's volume.

any such proceeding. The contemporary historians and chroniclers do not appear to have thought it worth their while to allude even to any such circumstance. It seemed to them too much a matter of course that a party strongly in the ascendant, should use the power in its hands to strike down their opponents by any exertion of tyranny and violence. But the modern reader must put down this also, together with so much else of the same sort, in the long account, which Florence had to pay in full, and the reckoning time for which was now drawing on so nearly. A.D. 1498.

Of course this new evidence of the determination of those in power to crush the community of St. Mark's at all hazards, gave renewed encouragement to the rioters, and disheartened the defenders of the convent from continuing a struggle, which, even if it were successful for the moment, was too manifestly useless. The result of this was soon seen in the firing of the great doors of the church. The smoke which filled the building became so thick that the friars were forced to break the windows to save themselves from being suffocated by it. And in a few minutes great bodies of flame began to burst into the church, and made the part of it in front of the altar no longer tenable. Frà Enrico il Tedesco, together with a companion, who had also obtained possession of an arquebuss, fell back into the choir, and clambering with their pieces to the top of the high altar, from behind, planted them one on each side of the great crucifix which surmounted it, and thence continued to fire on the invaders.

But Savonarola seeing that blood was being shed and lives lost in vain, and that it would be impossible to remain in the church many minutes longer, rose from his knees, and taking the Host in his hands, called on all those of the community present to follow him to the library, a fine hall, the comparatively recent work of Michelozzi.* As he

* This great architect and sculptor, the pupil of Gulberti, was born in 1391.

A.D. 1498. was going thither, followed by all of them, he met Frà Benedetto coming down hot and excited from the roof. "Frà Benedetto," said the Prior, looking on him sorrowfully, "leave the arms of the flesh, and take up your cross. It was never my will that my flock should become shedders of blood." And Frà Benedetto obeyed, threw down his partisan, and followed with the rest to the library. There Savonarola solemnly deposing the Holy elements, caused his friars to make a circle around him, while he addressed to them these last words.

"My sons, before God, and in the presence of the Holy Sacrament, with our enemies already in possession of the convent, I confirm to you my teaching. All that I have said to you, I have received from God; and He is my witness in Heaven that I have not lied. I did not know that all the city would thus quickly have turned against me. But God's will be done! My last word is this. Faith, patience, and prayer; . . . let these be your arms! I leave you with sorrow and anguish to go into the hands of the enemy. I do not know whether they will take my life. But I am certain that when I shall be dead, I shall be more able to assist you in heaven than I have been able to do here on earth. Be of good courage. Embrace the cross of Christ. So shall you find a gate of safety." *

By this time the assailants were masters of well-nigh the whole of the convent; and Giavacchino della Vecchia, who was in command of the guard of the *Palazzo Pubblico*, threatened to reduce the convent to a heap of ruin by means of artillery, unless Savonarola, together with Frà Domenico and Frà Silvestro, were given up into the hands of the Signory. Thus the government openly and shamelessly made itself the accomplice and abettor of a lawless mob of rioters, whom it was their primary and most urgent

* Villari, Vita di Sav., lib. iv. chap. viii.

duty to put down. Savonarola thereupon determined to give himself up; and preparatory to doing so, caused Frà Domenico to receive his confession, and administer to him the eucharist. A message had been despatched in the meantime to the Signory, requesting them to send an order in writing for the arrest of the three friars;—at the suggestion, it would seem, of one of the convent—the same Malatesta Sacramoro, who had been one of those who had wished to volunteer to enter the fire with Frà Domenico, of whom Professor Villari says that he turned to play the part of Judas.* A.D. 1498.

It is recorded that while an answer to this application was waited for, a picturesque incident took place, which is perhaps worth a line of record. Girolamo Cini, a worthy burgher of the city, who had been a consistent follower of Savonarola, and had been among those who had remained in the convent after vespers on that memorable Sunday evening, had been badly wounded in the head while fighting against the rioters. He had for a long time been desirous of taking the vows and the habit of St. Dominick, but as yet his desire had not been granted. Now, bleeding from his wound, he presented himself in the library before Savonarola and the assembled community, and, kneeling before the Prior, again made petition that he might be allowed to join the religious family; and Savonarola could not any longer refuse a request made in such a manner and at such a moment. The habit was given him; and in that moment of danger and confusion the new Dominican pronounced his vows, and assumed the perilous livery of his calling.

When the messengers came back from the *Palazzo* with the order, which had been sent for, Frà Silvestro, one of the three demanded by the Signory, could not be found. His

* Villari, Vita di Sav., lib. iv. chap. viii.

A.D. 1498. courage had failed him, and in the confusion of the moment he had hidden himself. Savonarola, however, and his faithful Frà Domenico were ready. Some suggested that, even at that last moment, Savonarola should attempt to escape from the back of the convent, by the way Valori had taken, as the sole hope of saving his life; and it is asserted that the Prior hesitated for a minute whether he should not yield to the suggestion. But while he was undecided, Frà Malatesta Sacramoro, who had suggested the sending for the order of arrest, turning to him, said, "Is it not the part of the shepherd to give his life for his sheep?" The words seemed to make a profound impression on Savonarola, who, turning without a word, embraced each one of the community, beginning with Sacramoro himself, and then, without any further hesitation, went forth, and gave himself into the hands of the officers of the Signory.

The furious crowd closed in around them, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the officers could prevent their prisoners from being torn to pieces by the mob on the spot. From the taunts and insults of the populace they neither could nor endeavoured to protect them. Their faces and dresses were begrimed and blackened by the smoke of the torches, which many of the crowd carried in their hands. They struck the prisoners from behind, and cried out to them to "prophesy who had struck them." They dragged them under the light of the torches, and jeeringly told them that "that was the true light."

With much ado they at last reached the *Palazzo*, where they were at once taken before the Signory; and that body, on asking whether they still maintained that the doctrine preached by them was of God, and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, ordered their incarceration in separate cells. Savonarola was taken to that same small

chamber in the tower of the *Palazzo* in which Cosmo de' Medici had been imprisoned before his exile.* A.D. 1498.

The first care of the Signory was to write letters to the different courts, giving an account, carefully coloured and modified according to the personage to whom they were writing, of what had been done. At Rome the envoys of the Commonwealth were instructed to ask of the Holy Father a plenary absolution for all the faults that had been heretofore committed in allowing Savonarola to preach, and in listening to his preaching, as well as of all the ecclesiastical irregularities of which the city had been guilty in laying violent hands upon ecclesiastical persons. At the same time the agents were directed to press again upon the Holy Father the subject of the urgent necessities of the Republic, and the petition that it might be permitted them to lay a tax on ecclesiastical property.

In reply, Alexander lost no time in writing back letters full of commendations, absolutions as many and as full as anybody might desire, and blessings of all sorts. With these were mingled admonitions to get the judging and condemning of the prisoners over as quickly as might be, and to take all possible care that no awkward chance should intervene to prevent the delivery of the Friar into his hands at an early day. As to the requests of the Signory in the matter of the tax on ecclesiastical property, he abounded in promises, but did nothing; keeping the desired bonus in hand, probably as a security for the completion of his vengeance on the "vermicciattolo," who had offended the majesty of the Holy See.

Ludovico il Moro, at Milan, was of course equally well

* The account of this memorable day has been taken from the lucid and eloquent narrative of Professor Villari, and the authorities cited by him, Vita di Sav., vol. ii. p. 150. See also Nardi, loc. cit.; Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xvi. ad finem; Cambi, loc. cit., *et seq.*

A.D. 1498. pleased with the news the Florentine Signory sent him, and equally complimentary in return.

But the best reply of all, in the estimation of Savonarola's enemies, and the most fatal to the whole of the political party which he had built up, came from France. Charles VIII., on whom all the hopes of the Frateschi had rested, had died on the 7th of April; and it was but a very insufficient consolation to the dismayed members of the party, to remark that the miserable circumstances attending his last hours * fell out in exact correspondence with that which Savonarola had foretold should happen to him, in case he should neglect, as he had done, to perform duly that office of "Flagellum Dei," which the prophet had assigned to him.

* See De Comines, Mem., lib. viii. chap. xviii.

CHAPTER VII.

Arrest of adherents of Savonarola—The mind of the populace turned against him—A "pratica" called to decide on what was to be done in his case—Boards of magistrates packed to ensure his condemnation—His condemnation predetermined—Numerous illegalities of the proceedings in the trial—Examination with torture prolonged for a month—Reports of the examination garbled—Three points on which the examination turned—his religious doctrine—his political conduct—his claims to prophecy—Vacillations and inconsistencies of Savonarola on this last head—Straightforward clearness on the other points—How far was Savonarola sincere in the matter of his supernatural gifts—Difficulties of the Signory to find ground for condemnation—Messer Cecconi, the notary—undertakes to falsify the process—A fresh trial, with renewed torture—Messer Cecconi fails to satisfy the Signory—Attempt to have a third trial—abandoned—Two editions of the process printed by the Signory—Savonarola's signature to the proceedings, how obtained—Nature of the language and expressions employed by him in his examinations—Trial of Frà Domenico—Trial of Frà Silvestro—of others of Savonarola's adherents—Conduct of the Friars of St. Mark—The Pope still insists that Savonarola should be given up to him—The government refuse to do this—A new Signory elected—Illegal exclusions from the Great Council—The new Signory as hostile to Savonarola as the preceding—Pope invited to send commissioners to Florence to superintend the condemnation and execution of Savonarola—This proposal acted on—New examination by the Papal commissioners—Sentence passed—The "Neri" in Savonarola's condemned cell—Last interview between Savonarola and Frà Domenico and Frà Silvestro—Ceremony of ecclesiastical degradation—Preparations for the execution—Taking the monastic habit from the prisoners—The formal cutting off from the Church—and handing over to the secular arm—Conduct of the three prisoners at the place of execution—Infamous conduct of the populace—The execution.

On the next day, which was the Monday in Holy Week, there was unusual activity at the *Palazzo Pubblico*. Mandates were issued for the arrest of all those, whether friars

A.D. 1498. or laymen, who had been known as the principal friends and disciples of Savonarola. Many, notwithstanding strict orders that none should be allowed to quit the city, found the means of escaping. Some, trusting in their innocence of any crime against the law, presented themselves when summoned before the Signory. And of these, some seventeen were arrested.* But those who had left the city at the first alarm had better read the signs of the times. It was manifest that no violation of law or of the principles of justice would be allowed to stand in the way of the fixed determination of the government to make an end of the man who had given them so much trouble and so much cause for fear. Indeed, the conduct of the Signory during the riots on the Sunday evening had quite sufficiently shown the *animus* by which their actions were governed.

And from hour to hour it became more clear that the fickle populace were inclined to go with the government in the desire to crush the man who had so lately been their idol. The failure to perform any miracle on the occasion of the ordeal by fire had alienated great numbers of the prophet's friends. And now the second failure to work any miracle for his own deliverance, when the hour of extreme need had manifestly come, when, if ever, the promise, which he had so often made, that God would not permit his cause to perish, should, they thought, have been fulfilled, went far to disgust and anger the ignorant masses of his followers.

The first measure of the Signory was to call a "pratica" for consultation on the question whether Savonarola was to be sent at once to Rome, or was to be tried at Florence, and if the latter, as to the method to be adopted in that trial. And the very first question proposed by the Signory indicated the determination to over-ride all law in the con-

* Villari, Vita di Sav., lib. iv. chap. ix.

duct of the business. The Magistracy, called the "Ten of Liberty,"* was known to be composed of men favourable to Savonarola and the Frateschi; and "The Eight," whose special duty it was to try prisoners charged with state offences, were not known to be sufficiently strong against him. It was therefore openly asked what was to be done about these magistrates. And it was voted by the "pratica" that the Signory should have full power to modify these bodies in any way that might be necessary for securing the end in view. It was then determined that Savonarola should be put on his trial in Florence; and on the 11th of April a special board of seventeen † was appointed to conduct his examination, and that of the two other friars, with full power, specially expressed, to use torture, and all other means which might be found necessary for the attainment of the proposed object. A.D. 1498.

It was the absolute and fixed determination of the party, who were then in the ascendant in Florence, to put Savonarola to death. More than enough has already been said to show that this was the case. The judicial proceedings to which he was subjected were merely a vain attempt to give some appearance of legality to the murder which his judges were quite resolved to commit. This is unquestionable. If any further evidence of the spirit in which this cruel and truly tragic farce of a trial was set about, were needed, it may be found in the composition of the special commission entrusted with the disgraceful duty of compiling the process and pronouncing the condemnation. The most noted and furious enemies of Savonarola were carefully and unblushingly selected for this task. And when it is told that Dolfo Spini, the leader of the "Com-

* It will be remembered that this was the name adopted for the board which had in earlier times been called "The Ten of War."

† See the authority for this number in the note to p. 156, vol. ii., of Villari's Vita di Sav.

A.D. 1498. pagnacci," the wild and reckless debauchee, the furious party leader, the man who, notoriously to all the city, had again and again striven to find an opportunity of murdering Savonarola in the streets, in the churches, in the pulpit even, was appointed one of the seventeen who were to try, and also one of the eight who were finally to pronounce sentence on the victim, it may be imagined what degree of conscientiousness or of shame impeded the government in the prosecution of its intent, and what degree of fairness or value of any kind a trial so conducted could have. Yet, despite the care which was taken in the composition of the commission to place upon it only men known to be ready to go all lengths to secure the object in view, so dreadful and so bad was the task assigned to them, that one of them, a certain Bartolo dei Zati, it should seem, refused to serve, declaring that he would not take part in the murder to be committed. He was not replaced; and the commissioners remained sixteen only in number.

The end was predetermined and not doubtful. Nevertheless the task of reaching it by means which could be made to appear to have any colour of legality was a thorny and difficult one. The record of the process, as it may still be read, is perhaps the most disgraceful of any that the page of history is called on to preserve, as that of the free act of a free people;—the most humiliating to the friends of popular government;—the most damning in any estimate of the fitness and capacity of the Florentine community of that century for self-governance or freedom;—the most decisive as a fore-warning of the Nemesis which, in the normal and necessary course of events, was soon about to fall upon the Commonwealth. Far better for the contemporary and posthumous reputation of the Florentine government would it have been, to have permitted their victim to be torn to pieces by the furious mob, which was so eager to despatch him, when the officers of the

Signory conducted him with so much difficulty through the streets from the convent to his prison in the Palazzo—far less demoralizing to the entire body social of the community. A.D. 1498.

The commission began in the usual legal manner by directing the accused to write with his own hand his account of the matters laid to his charge, and his confession of guilt or defence. But it was soon found that it was not safe to trust Savonarola with pen and ink. The very first use he made of them was such as to convince the commissioners that that mode of proceeding would never do. The pages he had written were hastily destroyed; and it was determined that the law could not be complied with in that respect.

But it is needless to point out in detail, as the biographers of the great Friar have carefully done, the several numerous particulars in which the statute law of Florence was set at nought in the course of this so-called trial, the strenuous efforts that were made by all sorts of jugglery, falsification, and falsehood, to shape the proceedings in some sort in accordance with legal form.

Having determined that no course could be ventured on which would involve the leaving on the record of any "litera scripta" by Savonarola, the examination by word of mouth and under torture was proceeded with. For more than a month the horrible work of bringing out the emaciated and lacerated body to the torture, and striving to frame the words which were wrung from its agony into such a meaning as should seem to warrant the fore-determined conclusion, was carried on. The pretended result of these protracted examinations was twice printed with variations) immediately after the condemnation of the victim. And volumes have been written by the contemporary disciples of Savonarola with the view of deducing from them the proofs of his innocence of the charges brought

A.D. 1498. against him, and (what is far more difficult to find) of the authenticity and genuineness of his claims to the character of seer and prophet. Modern writers also have laboured to extract from these notoriously falsified* records the amount of evidence to the truth which they may be made to yield. In the ninth chapter of the fourth book of his life of Savonarola, Professor Villari has with exceeding clearness and care laid before the reader all that can be asserted and all that may be inferred from the tangled mass of inconsistent, confused, and garbled evidence, which these records present. But the inquiry resembles walking on a moving sand. There is no sure ground. We have no means of knowing what or how much has been added, omitted, or falsified. Nor, in the condition to which Savonarola was reduced by the agonies to which he was subjected, would any word of admission, which was wrung from him, have been worth anything.

Nevertheless there are one or two facts of interest that may be deduced with some certainty from the study of these records. The points on which Savonarola was examined may be divided into three categories: his religious doctrine,—his political doctrine and conduct,—and his claim to the prophetical character. Now it is remarkable that the admissions, the contradictions, and inconsistencies into which it would seem that Savonarola was led by his examination under torture, relate altogether to the last subject. Again and again he asserts his claim to the

* The evidence that they were falsified is abundant. But perhaps the most conclusive is that of Jacopo Nardi, the most entirely trustworthy of all the contemporary writers. He says that, having had an opportunity of talking with "a great and noble citizen" who had been one of the judges of Savonarola, and who had been afterwards exiled, as was Nardi himself, after the return of the Medici, he asked what was the truth about the *Frate*. And the person in question replied, in the presence of his wife, that "for a good object some things had been added and some omitted" in the published account of the examinations.—Nardi, lib. ii.

character of a prophet, and again and again he denies it. A.D. 1498. Sometimes he plunges into a sea of scholastic sophistry, metaphysical subtleties, and visionary ecstasy, that effectually conceals the real thought, or expresses only the semi-delirious wanderings of the speaker. Savonarola was delicate of bodily fibre, and even exceptionally sensitive to the agony of the torture. It is recorded that the executioner declared that he had never had a patient on whom his operations produced so great and so rapid an effect. And Professor Villari remarks that after a short application of the cord Savonarola was wont to fall into a state of delirium, which would account for the inconsistencies he uttered on the subject of his supernatural powers. But the replies which he gave to the questions as to his religious doctrine and political conduct were equally given under torture. And it is asserted that on these points his answers were firm, straightforward, and unshakeable. It is with greater reason, therefore, that Professor Villari in another place remarks, with regard to the inconsistencies in question, that it was not to be expected that Savonarola, fainting under torture, should give a clear and consistent account of that which, in full freedom of mind and body, he had never himself seen clearly or set forth to others consistently. In fact, the same contradictions on this subject may be found throughout his preaching. And there is need of large allowance on the score of language used in special, mystic, and allegorical senses;—on the score of the changing moods and phases of a visionary temperament;—on the score of the obscurity naturally attendant on the effort to declare that which the speaker understands and feels but very vaguely and obscurely;—on the score, lastly, of phraseology purposely fashioned to convey a meaning to initiated disciples which it would not convey to the outside world, to reconcile any portion of Savonarola's utterances on this subject with perfect truthfulness. And

A.D. 1498. when all possible allowance shall have been made on these accounts, Professor Villari, the admirer and earnest though truthful apologist of the Friar, still thinks that Savonarola's mind was influenced by the authority of St. Thomas Aquinas, who maintains that a man is not bound to tell the whole truth before unjust judges;—by the example of "the prophets Amos, Micah, and Zachariah, who on certain occasions denied that they were such; and by that of John the Baptist, who did the same."

Whether during the solitary nights in the wretched prison to which he was consigned, each evening when the bodily and mental agony of the day was at an end, any reproaching consciousness of having been tempted at any time, by the intoxicating incense of popular veneration and admiration, to overstep, by the hair's-breadth only of a subtle metaphysical phrase perhaps, the true limit of his own perfect conviction, in his claims to the special favours of celestial enlightenment, and of having thus fed with gross and harmful husks of superstition his hearers agape for marvels;—whether any such partial or more clearly defined consciousness may have contributed its sting to the varied agonies of the hour, what mortal man shall judge! That his answers under torture to every sort of unintelligent, irreverent, taunting cross-questioning on this subject were contradictory, inconsistent, and unintelligible, may be fairly deemed to prove no more than does any other part of the shameful record.

It was, however, easy to declare it proved from this part of his examination that he had falsely claimed the gifts of prophecy. But what then? Such a charge might have sufficed at Rome to warrant the condemnation at which it was determined to arrive. But it would hardly do at Florence for the magistrates to condemn a citizen to death for being a false prophet. And notwithstanding the garbling to which the answers of the culprit had been

subjected, the manipulation had been too timid, it would seem, to produce such a case as could be given to the world as justifying a sentence to death. A.D. 1498.

The Signory found themselves in a difficult position. The people were beginning to murmur at the delay which had taken place in the bringing of the matter to a conclusion. The Pope was impatiently expecting to hear that his enemy had been condemned. The examination was concluded; and the magistrate dared not, on the showing of that record, condemn the prisoner to death. At this conjuncture one Messer Cecconi, a notary, who had originally belonged to the Palleschi,* or Medicean faction, who had been implicated in the conspiracy for which Bernardo del Nero died, and had subsequently found an asylum in St. Mark's, and had professed to become a disciple of Savonarola, made an offer to the Signory of his services for the taking down of Savonarola's replies from his lips, and compiling therefrom such a statement of the case as should justify them in passing to the judgment they wished. "If there are not sufficient grounds," he said, "means must be found of supplying them."† For the service thus offered the Signory agreed to pay this wretch four hundred ducats. The employment of the man for this purpose was illegal, inasmuch as the law required that the duty should be discharged by the notary of the Signory. But this was only one of the smaller matters in which the provisions of the law were set at nought in this memorable trial.

The results of the first examinations, therefore, were set aside. Savonarola was put anew to the torture, and during eleven days Messer Cecconi laboured to obtain such avowals from the prisoner, and to so alter those which he did get,

* From "Palle," the balls which formed the armorial bearings of the Medici.

† Villari, vol. ii. p. 163.

A.D. 1498. as to earn his four hundred ducats and make the path for the Signory clear before him.

But when the document thus produced was laid before that board they were exceedingly discontented with it, and with Messer Cecconi for not having better kept his promise. Still, as before, the results of the examination were not such as to enable them with any show of decency to condemn the prisoner. But what was to be done? The Pope was becoming exceedingly urgent, and complained of these delays in a matter so clear and simple. A letter is extant,* in which the Signory excuse themselves to the Pontiff, pointing out the difficulties they had to contend with in dealing with a man so subtle, so sagacious, and so firm as Savonarola. After much perplexed debate it was at last determined that, for the third time, a fresh process should be compiled. This was begun on the 23rd of May, fifty days, that is to say, after the time at which the first examinations had taken place, and it was proceeded with in all haste. The examinations took place twice each day, in the morning and the evening. It is not mentioned that this re-examination was accompanied by torture. But the notary, we are told, shaped the answers almost entirely according to his own wishes, writing down what he thought would conduce to the end in view, without any reference to what Savonarola really said. But even with this amount of licence, it was found before this amended trial had proceeded far that they were getting into difficulties;—that the document thus produced would not be one which they dared to exhibit to the world of Italy and of Europe.

Driven thus to their last shift, with the people of the city becoming more and more indignant every day at the extraordinary delay, and the Pope continually manifesting his discontent at their dilatoriness, the Signory determined

* It may be seen at p. 167, vol. ii., of Villari's Life of Savonarola.

to abandon this last attempt at decently colouring the murder they had resolved on committing, and to adhere to the original record of the process as drawn up by the perjured notary Cecconi. At the same time, with a due regard for the public monies of the community they were eternally disgracing, they manifested their sense of the insufficiency of Messer Cecconi's abominable work by refusing to pay him for it more than fifty ducats instead of the four hundred promised. A.D. 1498.

They determined also, in opposition to his urgent representations, to print the record of the process. But scarcely had the copies been distributed from the press, before the alarmed and perplexed Signory determined on recalling them. And the most stringent measures were taken to secure the destruction of every copy. Further mutilations and alterations were resorted to, and a second edition thus amended was published. But as usual in such cases, the attempt to suppress entirely what had once been disseminated by the press failed to attain its object. One copy only of this first edition of the record of Savonarola's trial is known to exist; in the library of the present Marchese Gino Capponi. But that one is sufficient for filling full the measure of that infamy which, when we look back on the completed story of the destruction of the Florentine liberty, contributes a large part towards the justification of the moral government of the world. This one remaining copy is sufficient also, on comparing it with the statement that was sent forth to the world, to excite our surprise at the smallness of the alterations which were thought to be of such moment, and to show us how hard pressed those wretched murderers felt themselves, and how anxiously they strove to lighten, even by a feather's weight, the load of infamy they were so consciously taking upon their shoulders.

Still one difficulty remained. The law absolutely re-

A.D. 1498. quired that this process should be signed by the hand of Savonarola; and this was a point, which, as it should seem, it was not deemed safe to dispense with. And the process was duly signed by him. But how this signature was obtained has always been a question on which the biographers of the Frate have been much in the dark. It is known that jugglery of some sort was practised. One process was probably read to him, and another paper adroitly presented to him for his signature. It is a matter which little merits the pains that have been taken to elucidate the real facts that occurred. Professor Villari remarks, that at all events the process which was read to Savonarola, in the presence of eight witnesses, of whom six were friars of St. Mark's, was one which he would have done far better to tear up than to sign. "But lost in those allegories of his, he thought that he had altogether saved his dignity and his conscience. It must be repeated yet once again, that Savonarola believed himself not to be in the condition of other men. Convinced that he possessed supernatural gifts, he thought that he ought not to speak the language of other men, and that he ought not to speak out his entire thought; because the vulgar would not have understood him, and for his disciples the language of allegory was sufficiently clear. This system, followed during his entire life, in his sermons, in his writings, in his familiar discourse, he thought fit to continue also in his trial." *

These are the words of an earnest admirer of Savonarola's character, and a very diligent student of his writings. But the apology is not a satisfactory one; and is hardly necessary. The record of the process which was read to him, was at all events not deemed by his persecutors to be sufficient for their purpose; for they

* Villari, Vita di Sav., vol. ii. p. 170.

fraudulently caused him to sign a different one. Of course the fact was, that however damnatory to his character of prophet the admissions couched in "allegorical language" may have been, they did not furnish sufficient grounds for a condemnation to death by a Florentine civil magistrate. When the question was of facts that would have gone to make out a charge of treason against the State, the Friar's language was not "allegorical" at all. Hence the necessity of the fraudulent substitution of a false document. And that the unhappy victim, called upon to formulate under the tortures of the rack precise definitions and assertions on subjects, which had never, in his best hours, been other than the dimly seen and imperfectly outlined imaginings of a mind hovering between reverie and ecstasy;—that now, prostrated alike in body and mind by his prolonged sufferings, and required to mark the accordance or disaccordance of the mass of inconsistent and unintelligible questions and answers read to him, with the necessarily imperfect recollection of his own half-delirious utterances on the rack;—that he should have put his signature under such circumstances to much which his admirers carefully and quietly studying the precise meaning and value of each word would rather that he should have denied and rejected, is hardly a matter for surprise or for apology. A.D. 1498.

Even this reading, however, and this signature so obtained, did not satisfy the requirements of the law. For the process ought to have been read to him in the presence of the people in the great hall of the *Palazzo Pubblico;* whereas it was done by an officer of "the Eight" only before the witnesses mentioned above; and then a declaration was made to the Great Council that Savonarola had refused to be present at a public reading of the process for fear of being stoned by the people.*

* Villari, Vita di Sav., lib. iv. chap. ix.; Nardi, lib. ii., Istorie di Firenze.

A.D. 1498. The trial of the other two friars* who had been arrested together with Savonarola had then to be proceeded with. That of Frà Domenico, the champion of the ordeal by fire, came first. And the comparison of his conduct under the torture with that of his more highly-gifted master is full of psychological interest. Firmer of bodily fibre, stronger of nerve, clearer though smaller of intellect, better assured of the duty that lay before him, undoubting, unflinching, Frà Domenico bore himself throughout the terrible ordeal with a consistent and heroic fortitude that never for an instant failed him. The torture to which he was subjected was worse than that of Savonarola;—was all that the diabolical ingenuity of the executioners could suggest. To these bodily agonies, his examiners strove to add mental distress and beguilement, by assuring him that Savonarola had retracted everything, and confessed to being an impostor. But Frà Domenico's robust faith was too strong to allow him to fall into any such snare; and his heroic endurance and unflinching courage rendered equally vain all attempts to shake the constancy of his testimony by bodily agony. Assailed by no importunate doubts, mystified by no metaphysical subtleties, Frà Domenico had no need of "allegorical language," and was in no danger of falling into contradictions. He maintained his full and undoubting belief that Savonarola was a prophet inspired by God, and that his prophecies were all true. No instances of the examiners, no repetition of the torture, could wrench from him any other reply.

The other of the two friars, who had been arrested together with Savonarola was a man of a very different metal. Poor Frà Silvestro appears to have been a weak, nervous, visionary man, subject to somnambulism, the results of

* Frà Silvestro, who hid himself on the night of the attack of the convent, as has been stated, was found and arrested the next morning.

which he mistook for celestial visions, of shallow and fickle mind, a poor creature in body, in intelligence, and in heart. At the time of the attack on the convent, he sought to escape the danger of the moment, as has been seen, by hiding himself. And at his trial his only object was to say and do anything and everything that might tend to save him from the rack, and from the sentence of death. A.D. 1498.

During the same time the trials of many others both of the friars of St. Mark, and of the laymen, who had helped to defend the convent, had been proceeded with. But nothing could be elicited from any of them that could contribute to the conviction of Savonarola of any offence against the laws. It is true that the assertions of the examiners that he had denied his doctrine and confessed himself an impostor, induced many of those who had been his disciples, to admit that they had been in error, and the victims of a delusion. But even in admitting this their testimony was altogether favourable to Savonarola. For the constantly recurring excuse made by these renegades for having suffered themselves to be led into error was, that anyone would have been equally deceived by the uniform sanctity of life, and the unimpeachable conduct and doctrine of the impostor!

The conduct of the friars of St. Mark's, however,—of Savonarola's own family, whom he had so well loved, and who had appeared to love and reverence him with so undoubting a devotion,—was, with but a few exceptions, very bad. The statement, that he had recanted, and owned himself to have been no prophet, found all of them, but a very few, ready to admit that they had been deluded and led into error by him. They wrote a letter to Pope Alexander, confessing their error, begging for absolution, and ending with the words,—"Let it suffice, then, to your Holiness to have in your hands Friar Girolamo

A.D. 1498. Savonarola, the source and fountain-head of every error. Let him be visited with a punishment proportioned to his faults, if indeed any can be found worthy of so great wickedness. But let us, poor misled sheep, return to the true shepherd." Two of the friars carried the letter to Rome, with warm recommendations from the Signory to the Pontiff; and were graciously received by Alexander, who gave the desired absolution, and received the erring community once more into Apostolic favour.

Meanwhile an active correspondence was going on between the Signory and the Pope. Alexander, though well pleased with what had been done, and now gracious in his communications with the agents of the Commonwealth, was by no means fully satisfied. He still insisted that Savonarola should be given up into his hands. And this the Signory would not do;—did not indeed dare to do. For the city, which had zealously enough supported them in the monstrous exercise of tyranny and illegality which had been practised against Savonarola, was by no means prepared to acquiesce in the humiliation of giving up a Florentine citizen,* to be judged by a foreign tribunal. Nevertheless the government was exceedingly anxious to obtain from Alexander the permission to lay that tax on ecclesiastical property which was so urgently needed to replenish the exhausted coffers of the State, and to carry on the war against Pisa. They adopted, therefore, in their dealings with the Pope a policy of delay and temporizing, which might lead him to hope that the consent of the Republic to his demand, that the Friar should be given up to him, might be the price of his permission to tax the Florentine clergy. The proceedings against the other two Dominicans, and the remaining prisoners who had been arrested at the same time, were purposely prolonged.

* By adoption only, it will be remembered.

In the meantime the period for the election of a new Signory, at the beginning of May, was drawing near; and it was above all things necessary to be secure against the contingency of the election of a "Piagnone" government, which would have saved Savonarola's life, plunged the Republic anew into all the consequences of a quarrel to the death with the Pope, and have revealed to the world all the scandal and the iniquities of the means which had been taken to secure the friar's condemnation. To provide against this danger, it was only necessary however to stretch a little further the illegal violence, which had so abundantly characterised the rule of the existing Signory. Nardi * tells us that when the Great Council for the election of the new Signory was assembled, some two hundred citizens were arbitrarily excluded; and Professor Villari, in recounting the fact on his authority, seems to think that but for this the election might have resulted in the nomination of a "Piagnone" Signory. But what we have seen of the recently prevailing temper of the city, would seem to show that this was hardly probable; nor can it be supposed that such a gross violation of law, justice, and constitutional right would have been quietly submitted to, if the members of the over-ridden party had not felt themselves too weak a minority to resist. A.D. 1498.

At all events the most important point to be observed in the matter is, that at no period of the story of the Commonwealth were illegal violence and tyranny more rampant and shameless, than now under the supreme governance of the popularly constituted Great Council.

The result of the election was, that a new Signory of entirely the same political colour and sympathies as the last was chosen, of which one Messer Vieri de' Medici was the Gonfaloniere. The new government lost no time in

* Istorie di Firenze, lib. ii.

A.D. 1498. calling together the "Pratica," which had been appointed to conduct the process of Savonarola, to consult with them what step was next to be taken in that affair. Some advised that further and more urgent instances should be made to the Pope, to induce him to consent to the execution of the sentence on the Friar at Florence, "where his crimes had been committed." But if it should ultimately be found necessary to yield on this point, the speakers recommended that a new trial should be ordered in order "to obtain from the culprits something more explicit." But Messer Piero Popoleschi, the late Gonfaloniere, who was now one of the "Dieci di Libertà," and who spoke with much authority, as having been prominently concerned in the conduct of the trial, rose and said that it should be represented to the Pope, that the number of the disciples of the *Frate* still existing at Florence made it very expedient that the execution of him should take place in that city; and that in case the Pontiff should desire further assurance and satisfaction in the matter, it should be proposed to him to send apostolic commissioners to Florence, who might proceed to any new examination of the Frate which they might desire, and to the superintendence of the execution of his sentence. "As to the proposition for a new trial," continued this magistrate in words too remarkable for them to escape textual citation, "their lordships, my colleagues, are of opinion that the matter must be allowed to sleep where it is,* *the examination having been conducted in the way it was*, and consideration being had for the repose and tranquillity of the city; for the retractation of it might cause scandal." † So perfectly aware were the magistrates who had presided over the examination, and concocted the lying report of it, that it behoved them

* "Doversi sopire qui."

† Cited by Villari from the records of the proceedings of the Signory in the Florentine archives. Vita di Sav., vol. ii. p. 187.

to shun any such light as might be let in upon the secrets of it, by any re-inquiry into the subject. A.D. 1498.

At last the Pope consented to the proposition that he should send commissioners to Florence. They arrived on the 19th of May, and made their solemn entry into Florence,—Gioacchino Turriano, general of the Dominican Order, and Francesco Romolino, bishop of Ilerda. The populace, which thronged the streets as they passed, cried "Let him die! Death to the Friar!" And Romolino, looking around him with a smile, said, "Yes, he will die sure enough!" Indeed the Florentine agent at Rome had written to the Signory, that the two commissioners carried with them orders to cause Savonarola to be put to death, "even though he were a second John the Baptist." *

On the next day, the 20th of May, the torture was once again made ready, and Savonarola was subjected to a third examination. The result was very much the same as on the two former occasions. The Papal commissioners were naturally anxious to show themselves worthy of their cloth, by excelling the laymen in the atrocity and ingenuity of the torments they inflicted on their victim, and in the audacious unscrupulousness with which they falsified the replies obtained from him. But on the whole the result was much the same: the same direct denials of heretical teaching, and political crimes; the same delirious faintings under torture; and the same unintelligible mysticism and contradictions, when the questioning turned on his prophetical and supernatural gifts.

At the end of the second day, the two commissioners were convinced that nothing was to be obtained by continuing the farce of an examination; and Bishop Romolino closed the sitting by ordering Savonarola to appear on the morrow to hear his sentence.

* Villari, and the early biographers cited by him. Vita di Sav., vol. ii. p. 165.

A.D 1498. "I am a prisoner," replied he; "I will come if they bring me."

The long day, however, was not yet over for Savonarola. After he had been conducted to his cell, five citizens, together with a notary, suddenly entered it, intent on making a last attempt by means of threats and promises, at obtaining from the Friar an avowal of something that could be shaped into a political offence, on which a civil condemnation could be colourably based. They were, as might be expected, as unsuccessful as all similar attempts had been hitherto. And the incident is only worth mentioning to show the strong desire of the government to find, if it were possible, some shadow of a legal pretext for the murder to be committed.

On that same evening of the 22nd of May, the two commissioners, and the citizens appointed as their assessors, held a sitting to deliberate on the sentence to be passed. There was little need of deliberation. Sentence of death was passed on Savonarola and on Frà Silvestro without even the smallest pretence of discussion. But Romolino proposed to spare the life of Frà Domenico. It was replied to him, however, that if that were done the whole doctrine of Savonarola would survive in him. Upon which the bishop answered at once, "Let us send him to death, then. A miserable friar more or less is of small consequence!"

The sentence was notified to the three condemned men that same night in their several cells, and a Benedictine friar was sent to them to perform the last duties of religion. Hardly had he left the cell of Savonarola, when a figure clothed wholly in black, with a black hood over the face, such as the members of the "Misericordia" may be seen wearing in the streets of Florence to the present day, entered the cell. It was Jacopo Niccolini, a member of the "Company of the Temple," popularly known in Florence as the

"Neri," whose special voluntarily assumed task it was to attend and comfort condemned criminals during their last hours; and he came to tender his services in this sort to Savonarola. The condemned man begged of him that he would obtain permission for him to have a last interview with the two friars, his fellow-victims. Niccolini went forthwith to the Signory, and, after some deliberation, permission was given for the desired meeting to take place in the great hall of the "Cinque Cento." It was already late in the night when the three condemned friars met in the dim obscurity of that vast hall for the first time since the memorable night of the attack and defence of the convent. A.D. 1498.

The emotions which must have rendered that strange meeting so impressive may easily be conceived; but Savonarola, it would seem, did not judge it fitting to permit to himself any manifestation of them. To Frà Domenico he merely said: "It is known to me that you have expressed the wish to be burned alive; but that is not well.* It is not lawful for you to choose the manner of your death. Are we sure that we can endure with fortitude that to which we are condemned? Neither does that depend on us; but on the grace which it may please the Lord to vouchsafe to us."

Then turning more severely to Frà Silvestro, he said: "Of you I know that you are anxious to manifest your innocence before the people. I command you to leave all such thoughts, and rather to follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who not even on the cross chose to speak of his innocence."

The two friars then kneeled devoutly, and received for the last time the benediction of their Prior before returning each to his own cell. Savonarola slept during the early

* The sentence ordered that the prisoners should be strangled before their bodies were burned.

A.D. 1498. part of the night; but the greater part of it was passed in prayer by each of the condemned in his separate prison. Early on the morning of the 23rd they were permitted to receive the eucharist together; and were then told that all was ready in the Piazza for their execution.

Immediately in front of the doors of the Palazzo Pubblico three lodges had been erected, one for the Bishop of Vasona, who had been appointed by the Pope as the ecclesiastical authority for the degradation of the three friars, before delivering them over to the secular arm; one for the Papal commissioners; and one for the representatives of the Florentine government. In front of these, a long platform, five or six feet high, and extending across about a quarter of the whole extent of the Piazza in the direction of the "Tetto de' Pisani,"* was erected, having at the end of it a huge upright stake, with a cross-bar near the top of it. From the point of crossing, and from either extremity of the cross-bar, hung three halters and three chains. The halters were destined for the execution of the three condemned men by hanging, and the chains for the suspension of their bodies while they were being consumed by the flames of a vast mass of combustible materials heaped around the foot of the cross.

Objection had been taken to this cruciform arrangement of the means of death; and the cross-bar, from which the two companions of Savonarola were to be hung, had again and again been shortened to avoid as much as might be the suggestion of such a resemblance.

The whole Piazza was, as may be supposed, densely crowded, mainly by the lowest classes of the populace; and it was with difficulty that the officers of the Signory kept back the throng, who, eager for the coming spectacle, pressed around the stake and the materials for the fire.

* The present Post-office, opposite to the Palazzo Pubblico.

Of course the great bulk of the crowd consisted of "Arrabbiati," "Bigi," or "Greys," as the favourers of the Medici were at that time called, and a mere ruffianly mob. The latter element was notably increased by the inmates of all the gaols, whom the Signory had liberated, specially for the occasion, from their confinement, probably with a view of making doubly sure the certainty that there would be a large preponderance of populace hostile to the friars, and desirous of witnessing their death. A.D. 1498.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when the three condemned came down from the *Palazzo Pubblico* into the *Piazza*. At the bottom of the great stairs they were met by a Dominican monk of the convent of Santa Maria Novella,—a different branch of the great Dominican order,—who was charged with the duty of taking from the prisoners their monastic habit, and thus leaving them clothed only in the woollen under garments worn by the friars, with their feet naked, and their hands bound. Savonarola was much moved by the order thus given him, which seems to have been unexpected. Taking off the dress, he said, before giving it up into the hands of the brother friar appointed to take it from him: "Oh! holy habit! how much I have loved thee! Thou wast granted to me by the grace of God; and I have to this hour preserved thee stainless. Now, I do not give thee up; but thou art taken from me!"

Then passing on to the tribune, where the Bishop of Vasona, who had formerly been a friend and disciple of Savonarola, awaited them, the three friars had to undergo the ceremony of ecclesiastical degradation. The wretched man to whose time-serving baseness this task had been assigned, felt so keenly his own degradation by the performance of it, that when, according to the prescribed formula, he took Savonarola by the arm, his hand shook, his voice trembled, and his agitation was so great, that in

A.D. 1498. his confusion, instead of saying, as the form required, "I separate thee from the Church militant," he unduly added the words "et triumphante,"—"from the Church militant and from the Church in its triumph." But if he was confused, the prisoner was not, and immediately corrected the error, saying: "from the Church militant, not from the Church in its triumph; for that is not given to thee." And the words were pronounced in tones which reached the ears of all around, and remained long in the hearts of many of them.

The formal handing over to the secular arm was then done, after they had been declared schismatics and heretics by the Papal commissioners. The representatives of the civil government then read the sentence; and the condemned men proceeded to pass along the raised platform amid the sea of the upturned faces of their enemies to the death-place at the further end of it. During this passage, the populace was freely allowed to approach the platform, and assail the prisoners, and specially Savonarola, with every species of taunt, ribaldry, and insult. But neither of the three showed the smallest want of firmness or composure. Even Frà Silvestro had in that solemn moment recovered his courage. Frà Domenico could not be prevented from chanting the "Te Deum" as he walked to the stake. Savonarola walked last, and spoke twice in reply to persons in the crowd;—to one who pressed forward with some word of comfort on his lips, he answered, "In the hour of death, God only can comfort his creatures!" To a certain priest named Nerotto, who asked him "how his courage supported him in that hour of trial?" he replied, "Our Lord suffered as much for me!"

Savonarola had to witness the death of his two disciples, before passing to his own. The details of the execution, which have been preserved, revoltingly indicate the excess of the party hatred that was leading the Commonwealth to

its ruin, and the horrible ferocity of the popular mind. Even the executioner, thinking to ingratiate himself with the populace, was guilty of horrible and loathsome ribaldry, insult, and cruelty towards his victims. He strove so to manage his dreadful task, that the flames should reach the body of Savonarola before the life should have left him. But it does not appear that he succeeded in doing this. On the contrary, some delay occurred in effecting the burning of the bodies, in consequence of a wind which blew the flames away, so remarkably that those of the "Piagnoni" who were among the crowd began to cry out, that the fire miraculously refused to do its work. A.D. 1498.

The bodies however were burned; and the Signory ordered that the ashes should be collected, and thrown from the Ponte Vecchio into the Arno. But the care taken to remove and destroy every portion of the remains of what had once been the integument of so mighty a soul, could not prevent the eagerness of those who deemed that a great prophet had that day been put to death from possessing themselves of relics to which they attributed miraculous virtue, and which at all events served to keep alive for many a generation in Florence the reverence and almost worship of his sectaries for the memory of Savonarola.

Nor could the prohibitions and vigilance of subsequent rulers prevent the spot on which he breathed his last from being found every year, till about the middle of the last century, covered with flowers on the morning of the 23rd of May, the anniversary of his murder.*

* Nardi, lib. ii., Istorie di Firenze; Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xvii.; Villari, Vita di Sav., lib. iv. chap. xi.

CHAPTER VIII.

Guicciardini's testimony to the results of Savonarola's teaching—Political aspect of affairs after Savonarola's death—The war against Pisa—Deplorable state of things in the Florentine camp—Ludovico of Milan jealous of Venice—He decides on giving assistance to Florence—Pope will not do anything to assist Florence; and why—His views for his son—The death of Savonarola contributed to render Ludovico favourable to Florence—Louis XII. of France—His claim to the Duchy of Milan—Louis prepares to invade Italy—Basis of the alliance between Louis and the Pope—Dispensation granted to the French king—Florentine troops defeated by the Pisans in May, 1498—Paolo Vitelli engaged by the Florentines—Caterina Sforza—Alliance with her and her son—Attempt to negotiate with Venice unsuccessful—Successes of Paolo Vitelli in the district of Pisa—The Florentines disapprove of his conduct of the war—Suspect his good faith—Party spirit less violent in the city—Venetians in league with the Medici invade the Casentino—Success of Paolo Vitelli against them—The Abbot Basilio—Ingratitude of Florence towards Vitelli—Suspicions and discontents in Florence—Duke of Urbino allowed to quit Bibbiena—Venice determines on withdrawing from Pisa—Terms of the agreement—Pisa refuses to submit—Intentions of Ludovico with regard to Florence—Jealousy between Farnese and Vitelli—Great Council refuse to vote money for the war—Votes some money at last in May, 1499—Renewal of the struggle before Pisa—Further successes of Vitelli—Messer Rinieri della Sassetta—His liberation by Vitelli—Siege of Pisa begun, July, 1499—Breach effected—Opportunity of taking the city lost—Great indignation against Vitelli—Malaria at Pisa—Deaths of successive Florentine Commissioners—Vitelli himself ill—Necessity of withdrawing the army from the environs of Pisa—Anger of the Florentines—Orders sent to the Commissioners at the camp to arrest Vitelli—He is conducted to Florence—examined under torture—and beheaded.

The testimony of Guicciardini, as given in that history of Florence which he wrote with no intention that it should see the light during his own lifetime, is far more valuable than any expression of opinion in the larger history of

Italy, written by him for his own contemporaries. And it is in the former work that he bears emphatic testimony to the faultless purity of Savonarola's life, and to the excellent moral effects produced in the city by his preaching.* Nevertheless those claims to prophetical gifts, which, whether they were wholly sincere or not wholly so, led the Friar so sadly astray, and into such fatal difficulties, produced a doubt respecting the real character of the man in the mind of that acute and sagacious worldling, Guicciardini, which is worth noting. It is of no value to us in assisting us in the formation of our estimate of the Friar's character; for the improved psychological science of the present day places at the disposal of very ordinarily gifted minds in our generation very much more efficient means for the analysis and right comprehension of such a man as Savonarola, than were possessed by even a Guicciardini three hundred years ago. But it is curious to observe the effect of those supernatural claims on an acute man of the world of that time. "Very many have for a long time believed," says he, "that this man was a true messenger from God, and a prophet, notwithstanding the excommunication, the trial, and the execution. I am myself doubtful, and have not been able to come to any decided opinion; and I reserve myself for the revelations of time, which will make all clear, if I shall live long enough. Thus much however seems certain, that if he was a good man, we have seen in these our days a great prophet; if he was bad, we have still seen a very great man; since besides his literary merit, if it shall really have been true that he was able to sustain for so many years so immense and public a dissimulation, without having ever been even once discovered in a falsity, it must be confessed that he must have had a most profound judgment, genius, and invention." A.D. 1498.

* Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 179.

A.D. 1498. But with regard to his political principles and influence on his time, Guicciardini, who would assuredly never have ventured to say as much in his published history of Italy, expresses himself as feeling no doubt at all.

"After the banishment of Piero de' Medici," writes the historian, "and after the calling of a parliament thereupon, the Commonwealth remained in a state of violent convulsion. The friends of the old order of things were now the object of so general an outcry, and the cause of so much danger, that Francesco Valori and Piero Capponi were powerless to defend them; and there was great danger that they might have been overwhelmed, and in such numbers that it would have been a most grievous wound to the Commonwealth, inasmuch as they were for the most part citizens of good standing, wealthy and discreet men, of great families, and of widely spreading connections. And if this had happened, disunion among those who had power in their hands would soon have arisen, as was seen in the case of 'the Twenty,'* who became divided because they comprised many men of nearly equal authority and influence, who were each of them ambitious of securing for themselves princely power.† After that would have followed fresh disturbances, and more parliaments, proscriptions of citizens, and more than

* That board of twenty "accoppiatori," to whom, as it will be remembered, the whole power of the state was entrusted.

† "Che appetivano il principato,"—a most noteworthy assertion, which the writer would not have ventured to make, if his writing had been intended for contemporary publicity. To understand the entire significance of the statement, the meaning of the phrase "il principato" in the mouth of a Florentine of that age must be borne in mind. It was not merely the leading or even despotic authority, but despotism in the form of an absolute and avowed "tyrant." But many others must have been more or less clearly aware of the fact which Guicciardini so broadly affirms. And what hope, it may be asked, could any of those citizens have had of the future liberties of their country, when each one of the foremost citizens of the Republic was guilty of such treason against them? That in fact there was no such hope is already but too clear.

one revolution. Perhaps the result would have been a violent restoration of the Medici, attended by the supreme destruction and ruin of the city. Savonarola alone arrested these forces, and paralysed the movement of them. He introduced the Great Council, and by that means put a bridle on all those who were bent on their own aggrandizement. He established the right of appeal to the Signory, which constituted a safeguard for the lives of the citizens. He made a general peace between all parties, which in fact removed the opportunity for proceeding penally against the friends of the late dynasty, under the pretext that they meditated returning to it. These measures were without any doubt the salvation of the city, and were, as he himself most truly said, in the interest both of those who had recently held the power in their hands under the Medici, and of those who were now and for the future called on to hold it."* A.D. 1498.

"The salvation of the city!"—such "salvation" as it was still possible to patch up for yet a little while! Savonarola in the heat and the almost ecstatic enthusiasm of his work hoped for better things,—much larger things too than the salvation of one city;—Florence was to him a sort of Jerusalem, from which the salvation and evangelizing of the whole of Christendom was to go forth; but Guicciardini, when he wrote, must have well known that the city was far past any such saving;—must have known it almost as well as we know it now.

In truth, after the prophet had been at last done to death; and after his enemies, proceeding according to the fashion of good husbandmen, who take all care to burn out the uttermost fibres and roots of noxious weeds with fire, had sedulously swept up and carted off the ashes of him into the Arno, the political outlook of the Com-

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 180.

A.D. 1498. monwealth was as gloomy as it could well be. Disappointment ensued instantly, even in the matter of the simplest of all the expected consequences, when, the Signory having done the deed, held out their hands to the Pope to receive the price of it. Alexander, while his furious thirst for vengeance had been still unsatisfied, had abounded in promises that everything should be made pleasant to the Republic in his relations with it. And as far as all-embracing absolutions went, he was no niggard. But in that vital matter of the tax on ecclesiastical property, the Signory seemed to be as far off as ever from obtaining their desire. And how was the war against Pisa to be carried on?

The foremost and most urgent point of all in that question of the salvation of the city, in the eyes of Florentines of all grades, classes, and parties, the only point on which men of every political colour were agreed, was the destruction of the liberties of Pisa, and re-imposition on that city of the yoke of Florentine despotism. And here is a picture of the condition of the prospects of the Commonwealth in that respect, very graphically given in a report from the War Board * to the "Pratica" engaged in deliberations as to the answer to be made to the Pope's demands, while the trial of Savonarola was in progress. "We have spent," said Messer Battista Ridolfi in the name of the Board, "twenty thousand ducats; and of the fifteen thousand a month which you have assigned to us scarcely anything has been received. The number of the enemy increases from day to day. The Venetian ships are blockading Leghorn. The excessive price of provisions, and the absence of discipline among the troops, would prevent us from executing any movement, if need should

* The "Dieci di Pace e Liberta," as the Commissioners for the conduct of the war were absurdly called, instead of by their former more sensible title, the "Dieci di Guerra."

require it. At Leghorn, a place of the utmost importance, as a means of receiving grain, as a seat of commerce, and as a place of transport for artillery, repairs are urgently needed, which cannot be executed for want of money. Volterra, which it is very important to garrison, is utterly abandoned; the hill country is altogether neglected, and at the first movement would fall into the hands of the enemy. And the lowlands are in no better condition. Pescia and the whole of the Valdinievole lies open to the enemy. In the district above Vogliano, a most important position, the officers, the Commissioners, and the troops are all crying aloud for money. The Pisans are already making raids in the Maremma; and the pestilence of the malaria * does the rest. Their Lordships, my colleagues, request therefore that provision may be made for these necessities at all costs, for the most important interests of the Commonwealth are at stake; and whatever may happen, they, having laid these things before you, hold themselves as not responsible *coram Deo*." † A.D. 1498.

The horizon was very black; but, as usual, the jealousies and fears, and far-forecasting hopes of the various other Italian powers came, as they had so often done, to the assistance of one of those continually plotting and scheming communities, when on the point of being plundered or ruined for the profit of another of the family. Ludovico il Moro of Milan, perhaps the keenest politician of all the race of them, began to feel alarmed at the prospect that the Venetians might make themselves permanently masters of Pisa. And he gradually advanced from cautious underhand encouragements to the Florentines in the first instance, to open promises, and lastly to effectual acts of assistance, as the development of the political situation

* The district around Pisa at this period suffered almost as badly from malaria as the Campagna of Rome at the present day.

† Report cited from the Archives, by Villari, Vita di Sav., vol. ii. p. 91.

A.D. 1498. progressed, and rendered his path clearer and safer. He refused to allow the Venetian troops to pass southwards towards Pisa through his territory; compelling them thus to take the longer and more difficult route through that of the Duke of Ferrara. He induced the Emperor to send away all the foreign ambassadors at his court, except the Spaniard, and then in a day or two to recall all of them, save the Venetian envoy. Finally, he sent the Florentines three hundred bowmen, and joined with them in hiring a body of three hundred men-at-arms under the Prince of Piombino and Gian Paolo Baglione. Above all, he lent them more than three hundred thousand ducats, and offered still further sums, if they should be needed.*

Besides all this, he endeavoured to persuade the Pope to come to the assistance of the Florentines. It was easy indeed to show that it was by no means the interest of the Holy See to permit Venice to establish her dominion in central Italy, and to acquire such a base for further operations as Pisa would furnish to her. And Alexander promised that he would send a contribution of troops to the Florentine armies before Pisa. The promise, however, was never kept; and very shortly afterwards the Pope openly refused to do anything of the kind. The fact was that Alexander, though he recognised the impolicy of suffering Venice to become the mistress of Pisa, was more powerfully influenced in a contrary direction by hopes and plans that were nearer and dearer to him. He, like each of the worst of his predecessors, was anxious above all else to become the founder of a princely line, and to find for his family a principality somewhere between the Alps and the Sicilian Sea. This was the sole serious object of his policy and the labour of his graver hours. Profligate

* Guicciardini, Storia d'Italia, lib. iv. chap. i. ad ann. 1498.

debauchery, the foulest and most loathsome that has ever been forced in the interest of truth upon the reluctant ear of mankind, the sportive prostitution of ecclesiastical dignities to be the reward of infamous ministers to his scandalous pleasures, the shedding of blood for the gratification of his vengeful passions,—all these were but the amusements of his lighter hours. To make Borgia a name in the list of Italian "tyrants,"—this was the real object for which he lived, and for which he had purchased the Papacy. Nor was he diverted from it by the untoward accidents of domestic murder and fratricide. Since a fratricidal hand had deprived him of one son, inasmuch as the murderer survived the murdered man, it became necessary that the fratricide should be the stock of a future line of princely Borgias. He had made the bloodstained monster, his son Cesare, a Cardinal; furnishing satisfactory proof that he was of legitimate birth, and no son of his, as was necessary to enable him to hold that dignity. But when it became expedient that this Cesare should be made the lay founder of a princely family, he deprived him of the purple, bringing forward as a reason for doing so conclusive proofs of his illegitimacy. And now, when it became a question whether he should contribute to restore Pisa to the Florentine rule, the Holy Father was intently occupied in looking out for "an establishment" for his son.* A.D. 1498.

This primary care it was which determined Alexander to break his promise made to Ludovico, that he would send aid to Florence, and which prevented him from acceding to the petition of the Signory that they might be allowed to lay a tax on ecclesiastical property.

It will not have been forgotten that the time was when Florence could do that at need, without asking any Papal consent to the measure. But that was in better times, long since vanished!

* Guicciardini, Hist. Fiorentina, chap. xviii.

A.D. 1498. It was quite upon the cards, as Alexander and his son Cesare Borgia conceived, that in the present disturbed condition of Tuscany, and due regard being had to the internal political situation of Florence, some city and fair slice of central Italy might prove to be the destined locality of the future Borgian greatness. But in any case, it was above all things necessary to the realization of any such hopes, that Italy should not be permitted to sink into a state of peace and repose. That would indeed be fatal to the proposed carving out of new states, and the foundation of new dynasties. And now this open sore of quarrel between Florence and Pisa was the only impediment to a consummation so strongly to be deprecated. As long as that sore remained open, there was always hope that it might spread ;—nay, nearly the assurance that it would do so. All things were thus possible. Swords were kept out of their scabbards. The game was alive ; and any outsider, well backed, might come in a winner. But with Pisa restored to Florence all this would be at an end. Italy would be at peace from the Alps to the sea, and the Borgias would remain unprovided for.

Therefore, Pope Alexander would do nothing that could contribute to this result.

The goodwill, however, and now the openly given assistance of Milan was sufficient to inspire the Florentines with renewed courage and fresh hopes of success in the task of recovering Pisa. And the rulers of the city were aware that one of the reasons which had induced Ludovico to determine on frankly coming to their assistance was the death of Savonarola, and the complete ascendancy of the party opposed to him. For Ludovico, with the true instinct of a tyrant, had felt an insuperable aversion from connecting himself or his fortunes in any way with a state under the influence of such a thorough-going democrat as the Friar. He hated him, and his doctrines, and his

policy. As long as the power and success of Florence meant the power and success of Savonarola and his party, and his principles, Ludovico would do nothing to assist Florence;*—would have preferred that she should in every way come to trouble and loss of her influential position in Italy. But with the sort of men now at the head of the Commonwealth, he thought he saw the possibility of making an advantageous alliance;—an alliance, indeed, which was intended by the shrewd and provident Ludovico to serve him for a very important purpose. A.D. 1498.

There began about this time—the summer of 1498—to be seen a probability that a new player might shortly appear on the intricate political drama that was being played on the Italian stage. Charles VIII. of France, as has been mentioned, had died in April, while the trial of Savonarola was still in progress; and had been succeeded on the French throne by Louis XII. Now Louis XII. was not only the inheritor of the claims of his predecessor Charles to the throne of Naples, but was the grandson of Valentine, the daughter of Giovanni Galeazzo Visconti, who had married his grandfather Louis, the Duke of Orleans, brother of Charles VI. of France, with the express stipulation on the part of Giovanni Galeazzo, that on failure of his male line (which occurred on the death of his son Filippo Maria Visconti), the heirs of Valentine should succeed to the Duchy of Milan. Francesco Sforza, the husband of Bianca, the natural daughter of Filippo Maria Visconti, had however claimed, and made good his claim to, the succession by force of arms and the aid of fortune. But Charles of Orleans, the son of Valentine Visconti, and the father of Louis XII., had never ceased to assert his claim, though he had never been in a position to attempt anything towards making it good. Now, how-

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xviii., op. ined., vol. iii.

A.D. 1498. ever, the inheritor of this claim was the King of France. He was, moreover, that same Duke of Orleans who had occupied Asti at the time of Charles VIII.'s invasion of Italy, and who had then conceived a strong personal dislike to Ludovico Sforza, the actual possessor of the duchy he claimed as his own.

It must be confessed that this claim of Louis to the Duchy of Milan was, according to the ideas and the laws of succession prevailing at that time, a very legitimate one, and certainly better founded in law than that of the House of Sforza. It is true that the Italian lawyers maintain that, inasmuch as Milan was a fief of the Empire, the stipulation made by Giovanni Galeazzo with his son-in-law was null and void unless confirmed by the Emperor; but the Empire was in abeyance at the time, and the instrument in question was confirmed by the reigning Pope. And the Popes, by virtue of a law made by themselves (as Guicciardini remarks with a sneer*), claim the right of administering the Empire in such matters during the vacancy of the Imperial throne. Putting, however, the shadowy nature of the objection on the score of the feudal supremacy of the Emperor, and the absence of his sanction, against the unsatisfactory foundation of the Papal claim to interfere in the matter, the clear fact remains that the right of the legitimate Valentine to the succession must be considered better than that of the illegitimate Bianca.

At all events, the claim of Louis was quite good enough to render it a source of very considerable uneasiness to Ludovico Sforza; and particularly so, when the claimant became King of France. And when, shortly afterwards, Louis caused himself to be crowned King of France, of the Two Sicilies, of Jerusalem by right of Naples, and Duke of Milan, the matter began to look very serious, and the Italian cities and princes began to speculate upon the

* Storia d'Italia, lib. iv. chap. i. ad ann. 1498.

changes and chances that another French invasion might bring about. A.D. 1498.

And the prevision of this event had been a main reason with Ludovico for wishing to be found, when it should happen, the friend and ally of Florence: for Florence still remained the only power in Italy traditionally attached to the House of France.

Circumstances, however, produced a second friendship between Louis XII. and another of the Italian powers. The French king had found himself in need of the Papal assistance for a little private matter of his own; and Alexander had been as quick as any of his fellow-potentates to perceive that the friendship of a King of France, who might be expected very shortly to cross the Alps with a French army at his back, was likely to be a very desirable thing. The Holy Father therefore had reason to think himself very fortunate in that the service which King Louis required of him was of such a nature as to justify him in putting a high price on the article.

The fact was, that Louis was married to the sister of the late King Charles; but she was ugly, childless, and all but deformed.* Besides this, the widow of his cousin Charles was by inheritance Duchess of Brittany; and Louis wanted simply to get rid of his predecessor's sister, and to take his widow to wife instead. Now inasmuch as the act of Papal legerdemain, which was needed for the execution of this scheme was, as Guicciardini † phrases it, "arduous, difficult, and contrary to all honour and honesty," the Holy Father could not be expected to perform it without a suitable recompense by way of honorarium. But this was readily discovered in the circumstances in which the high contracting parties

* "Quasi un mostro."—Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 183.

† Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 183.

A.D. 1498. found themselves. In return for the aid which the French king would easily have it in his power to afford to Alexander in his darling project of finding a principality for his son Cesare, when the French legions should be in Italy, the Pope was willing and ready to grant Louis full permission and licence to divorce and marry anybody whomsoever. And so the King and the Pope became fast friends and allies, on the principles of reciprocity. Similar considerations have in all ages regulated those ever portentous alliances between crowns and the tiara, from which have sprung the most insuperable obstacles to the progress and improvement of mankind.

Meanwhile, towards the midsummer of that year—1498—the timely assistance of the Duke of Milan began to tell with effect on the struggle which the Commonwealth had been carrying on hitherto with such small success in the district around Pisa. In May the Florentine troops, under Count Rinuccio Farnese and Guglielmo de' Pazzi, had sustained a very damaging defeat at the hands of the Pisans and Venetians in the valley of Santo Regolo; the result of which was, that the entire province, and all the Maremma, was for the moment at the mercy of the enemy. Strange bands of Albanians and Stradiots, brought to the assistance of the Pisans by their Venetian allies, overran and devastated the country, at one moment scouring the rich Valdinievole, at another suddenly appearing in the hill district of Volterra, and sometimes pushing their raids as far as San Miniato al Tedesco, and even to Castello Fiorentino, in the Val d'Elsa, a distance of not more than twenty miles from Florence.*

But this was the turning-point of the war. Alarmed by the near approach of such calamities, liberated from the

* Guicciardini, Storia d'Italia, lib. iv. chap. i.; Storia Fiorentina, chap. xviii.; Mecatti, Storia Chronologica della Città di Firenze, 2 vols. 4to, Napoli, 1755, vol. i. p. 493.

perplexing and absorbing internal difficulties connected with the putting down and hunting to death of Savonarola, and assisted by the troops, and still more efficiently by the money of the Duke of Milan, the Florentines determined to throw their whole power and energy into the struggle. Paolo Vitelli, of Città di Castello, one of the renowned captains of the day, was made General-in-Chief of the Florentine forces, and was despatched, together with his younger brother Vitellozzo Vitelli, to the camp near Pisa. Jealousies of the old sort, which had so often brought the Florentine arms to trouble, were not without difficulty smoothed over, by giving to the Count Rinuccio the title of "Governor," while Vitelli took that of General. For how could a Farnese be subordinate to a Vitelli, or a Vitelli recognize the superiority of a Farnese? Ottaviano, the son of "Madonna di Imola,"—that notable Caterina Sforza, now the widow of two husbands, the Conte Girolamo della Rovere, son of Sixtus IV. in the first place, and of Giacomo Feo, a handsome subject of her own in the second place, both murdered by her ladyship's turbulent subjects of Forli and Imola;—Ottaviano, her son by the first of these husbands, was engaged in the Florentine service; and the lady herself and her descendants made Florentine citizens for the purpose of legalizing a third marriage which she contemplated with Giovanni de' Medici, the son of that Pier Francesco, whose differences with the head of his family have been related in a previous chapter. The conferring on her of the citizenship of Florence was necessitated by a law which had been passed immediately after the banishment of Piero de' Medici in 1494, forbidding any Florentine citizen to marry any one who was either in her own right a sovereign, or was connected by blood with the family of any ruling house.* A.D. 1498.

* This marriage was an important one. Giovanni died within a few months. But Caterina had a posthumous son, who was that famous

A.D. 1498. An important point was gained by thus making close allies of "Madonna di Imola" and her son; for the hostility of her territory to the Venetians, already excluded from that of the Duke of Milan, made it very much more difficult for them to send troops and supplies for the maintenance of the war around Pisa.

The Florentine prospects began to look so much brighter indeed, that it was thought that Venice might not be disinclined to give up her ambitious hopes and make peace, if she could find a creditable pretext for leaving the Pisans to their fate. Messer Guidantonio Vespucci and Messer Bernardo Rucellai were therefore sent as ambassadors to Venice, to see if this could be arranged. But they found that Venice had not yet been brought to that point, and that the Senate was only pretending to entertain negotiations for the purpose of blinding the Florentines to their real designs. The ambassadors, after remaining at Venice about a couple of months, returned, with a report that no good was to be done.*

So there was nothing for it but to press the war hotly. And the first operations of the new General-in-Chief were very successful. After inflicting considerable damage on the enemy in a few skirmishes, he advanced his camp to Vico Pisano, and in a few days took that important fortress. This rapid success put the Florentines into high spirits; for it was well remembered that in the old war against Pisa it had cost the efforts of a large army during many months to take Vico; and in the present war all attempts to drive the enemy from that strong position had

Giovanni delle Bande Nere, the most famous captain of his day, and the father of that Cosmo de' Medici who became Duke of Tuscany after the murder of Alexander, the last of the elder branch, and from whom descended in a right line all the Medicean dukes of Tuscany, till their extinction in the person of Gian Gastone VII., Grand Duke in the year 1741.

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xviii.

resulted only in heavy losses. For a few days the name of Paolo Vitelli was the most popular in Florence. But the favour of the people lasted no longer. The general, well aware that Pisa was very strongly garrisoned, well supplied in all respects, and filled with a population desperately determined to resist to the uttermost rather than bend their necks again to the Florentine yoke, judged that his most prudent course would be to make himself master of so many strong points around the city as to effectually blockade it, and cut it off from all assistance from without. At Florence, however, the citizens, and especially the populace, were of a different opinion. They were clamorous that the army should be led at once to the attack of Pisa. Vitelli, however, "most obstinately," as Guicciardini says,* "refused to listen to the dictation of the citizens, and proceeded to carry on his own professional business according to his own opinion." But one of the numerous evils arising from the practice of carrying on the wars of the Commonwealth by means of hired troops and foreign hireling generals, was that they were always open to the suspicion, which the Florentine people were ever ready to conceive, of being desirous rather of prolonging a war than of bringing it to a conclusion, however successful. What these professional soldiers, who live by their swords, want, argued the citizens, not altogether unreasonably, is continued employment for their troops and prolonged stipends for themselves. They avoid striking a decisive blow, which would effectually do the work we want done, and bring the war to an end; and not only is our treasury exhausted by the needless continuance of pay to officers and men, but we are baulked of the end we have in view. A.D. 1498.

Vitelli proceeded, unheeding the clamours of his employers, in his own way; and consumed the summer in a

* Storia Fiorentina, chap. xviii.

A.D. 1498. series of assaults on various fortresses and important vantage points around Pisa, with uniform good success. But the summer *was* consumed. Pisa was still unsubdued; and Florence was in a very bad humour with her successful general. Nevertheless the prospect of matters in the city was in every way improving. The necessity of making a vigorous and united struggle with the whole available energies of the Commonwealth for the attainment of the object, which all parties had equally near at heart, had in a great degree lulled, or at least suspended, the fury of party hatred; insomuch that, in the elections to the magistracies in October, several citizens of known Piagnone sympathies had been chosen.

An attempt of the Venetians to invade the territory of the Republic, by the mountain passes which cross the Apennine in the direction of Faenza, had, by the assistance of the Duke of Milan and of Catherine Sforza, been easily defeated, and all seemed to be going well—when, in October, sudden news reached Florence which caused much confusion and panic in the city.

That same Messer Piero da Bibbiena, who had been the private secretary and one of the most unpopular of the ministers of Pietro de' Medici, had family connections of considerable influence in the neighbourhood of the little town in the Casentino, from which he took his name. Now the Venetians, much puzzled, as has been mentioned above, to find any route by which they could penetrate into Tuscany, had been intriguing with these people with a view to contriving by their aid a descent into the valley of the Casentino, across the hills that lie around the sources of the Arno and the Tiber. They had leagued themselves with the banished Medici for this purpose, and had the two brothers, Pietro and Giuliano, with them. It had been known, or suspected, that some design of the sort was in contemplation; and Cappone Capponi had been sent as

commissary for the Commonwealth into that district, to watch and prevent the execution of any such plan. But the commissary was not vigilant enough. And thence the sudden tidings, which, as Guicciardini says,* "threw all our State into confusion." The news was nothing less than that the enemy were already in force in the Casentino, had already made themselves masters of Bibbiena, and would, there was much reason to fear, find little difficulty in seizing Poppi, Prato Vecchio, and the other towns of that fertile district. A.D. 1498.

The news was bad enough in any way; but what made it much more alarming to the Florentine mind was the fact that the exiled pretenders, Pietro and Giuliano de' Medici, were with the invaders. This was the great danger of all, and that which moved the government of the Republic to fly with every energy it possessed to remedy the evil. The Venetians were enemies; they were coming for the purpose of sustaining Pisa in its detestable rebellion; and it was very grievous that they should have found this means of stealing into the country, after they had so successfully, and at the cost of so much trouble and negotiation with the border States, been blocked out at all other points. And bad enough it was that an object so dear to the citizens as the recovery of Pisa should be rendered less attainable by such an incident. But the fate of Pisa, close as that matter lay to the heart of every Florentine, was as nothing compared to the consequences that would arise from a restoration of the exiled family by foreign arms in league with domestic treachery.

All the forces, therefore, at the disposition of the government were sent in all haste into the Casentino. The Milanese troops sent by Ludovico il Moro were instantly despatched thither under the Milanese *condottiere*, Fracasso;

* Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 190.

A.D. 1498. a price was put on the head of Giuliano de' Medici, that extreme measure having been adopted previously only in the case of Pietro; and immediately afterwards Paolo Vitelli, who was losing his time and doing nothing of moment in the Pisan district, was ordered to march his whole force into the Casentino in all haste.

Paolo Vitelli marched into that upper valley of the Arno, and was as successful against the enemy as he had been in his operations during the summer in the country around Pisa. He forced the invaders to shut themselves up in the little town of Bibbiena, on its isolated hill at the foot of the Apennine which shuts in the extremity of the Casentino, where they remained unable to get away, and unable to victual themselves for any protracted time. But he and the regular troops had been very materially assisted in achieving this result by the activity and valour of the hill population of the surrounding district, under the notably able leading of the Abbot Basilio, the head of the neighbouring convent of Camaldoli. Sallying down from their villages, nested in inaccessible nooks among the stony hills, under this ecclesiastical leader, they had inflicted severe losses on the invaders, and had contributed much to the favourable results which had been attained.

Now Vitelli had been becoming very unpopular at Florence, as has been seen, because he had not followed up his summer successes in the Pisan district by immediately marching against that city itself. It was more agreeable also to the Tuscan vanity of the non-military citizens of Florence to represent to themselves, that the repulse of the Venetians was the work of Tuscan valour and enterprise; that at all events the bold and hardy *contadini* their subjects, could fight, if they, the citizens, thought fit to occupy themselves in more "civil" occupations; rather than to allow that the good work had been done by hired

troops, and by a captain of whom they were already suspicious, and with whose conduct they were discontented. A.D. 1498. So nothing was talked of in Florence but the prowess and feats of the gallant Abbot Basilio; and the ungrateful citizens were as discontented as ever with their successful general. Why did he not take Bibbiena at once? It was midwinter, and the scene of operations a difficult mountainous district, where the winter is especially severe. There was no snow in the streets of Florence! Surely it must be an easy matter to take the little town of Bibbiena. But it was the old game over again! The prolongation of the war, not its happy conclusion, was Vitelli's object. It was all a plot,—a plot to drain the purses of the citizens. That Duke of Milan, too! They were all in a league together,—these Dukes, and Princes, and feudal Lords, and Captains! The Duke had sent forces, and had lent large sums of money in the extreme need of the Florentine treasury. Yes, that was all very well; but he had objects of his own to gain. All the world knew what Ludovico il Moro was. Was he ever known to go by a straight path to an honest end? And now we hear that our own commissary, Messer Pier Giovanni Ricasoli, has allowed the Duke of Urbino, the general of the forces in the pay of the Venetians, to depart out of Bibbiena in safety, because he was taken ill there! Without any authority from "the Ten of War too!" Says that he did it because, if the Duke had died there in Bibbiena, this dukedom of Urbino would have fallen into the hands of the Venetians. Bah! We are cozened and cheated! Our commissaries are traitors; our general a mere swindler; our ally of Milan not to be trusted from one day to another; and we do not see that we are a bit nearer to getting Pisa than ever!

This was the temper of the public mind in Florence in the beginning of the year 1499; but there seems no ground

A.D. 1499. for thinking that any of these discontents and suspicions were well founded. Guicciardini thought * that the Commissary Ricasoli had acted judiciously in allowing the Duke of Urbino to quit Bibbiena for the reason assigned. Vitelli seems to have acted not only to the best of his judgment, but judiciously and to good purpose. And though it was very true that little trust could be put in the Duke of Milan, save in his keen perception of his own interest, and of the means conducive to it, yet there was good ground for thinking that Ludovico's interest and aims were at this juncture coincident with those of Florence.

And, in fact, the result of the losses inflicted on the Venetians in the Pisan district and in the Casentino, and of the imprisonment of their forces in the walls of Bibbiena, was that by the intervention of Ludovico, who employed the Duke of Ferrara as mediator in the matter, the Venetians, further pressed by fear of being obliged to go to war with the Turks, consented at last to a treaty by which they engaged to withdraw from the Casentino and from Pisa on or before the 25th day of April, 1499. Florence was to pay, as indemnity in part for the expenses of the war, a hundred and eighty thousand ducats in fifteen years; and various stipulations were made with a view of regulating the position which Pisa was to hold under the rule of Florence, and assuring to the former city some few guarantees against the absolute despotism of the latter. This was the most difficult part of the negotiation.† The Venetians were anxious for their honour's sake, and for the sake of appearing to the world not to have done all they had done at Pisa for nothing, to make the best terms they could for the Pisans. And Florence was extremely eager to secure the full power of oppressing a once hated rival,

* Storia Fiorentina, chap. xviii. ad finem.

† Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xix.

and now more hated subject city, at pleasure. But all these negotiations of course proceeded on the supposition that Pisa would accept the position to be thus made for her. Pisa, however, refused to do anything of the kind. Bitterly complaining that they had been sold by the Venetians, the Pisans refused to open their gates, or to come to any terms with a people who had not yet acquired by force of arms the right to replace upon their necks the yoke which they had once felt, and which, let the stipulated guarantees be what they might, they well knew again awaited them, should they be forced to yield. A.D. 1499.

Nothing remained, therefore, but to continue the war against Pisa. But the question was now narrowed to a struggle between city and city. The Pisans were left to their own resources; and Florence determined, seeing that such was the case, to gird up her loins for the contest without seeking any further assistance from the Duke of Milan. She might have had it for the asking; and indeed the Duke was much annoyed at her not choosing to do so; for he was still extremely anxious to be on such terms with Florence as might enable him to use the Commonwealth as a shield, between himself and the enmity of the King of France. And this appears to have been the genuine motive of all his conduct towards Florence, from the time when he determined to declare himself openly her ally against the Venetians.

The two Signories, during the first four months of 1499, had many difficulties to contend with in preparing for the renewed struggle with Pisa. The mutual jealousies between the Conte Rinuccio Farnese and Paolo Vitelli were a source of much perplexity and trouble. Farnese had been much longer in the service of the Republic than Vitelli,—had with much difficulty been persuaded to retain his commission when Vitelli had been engaged; and was only induced to do so by the invention for him of the

A.D. 1499. new and rather empty title of "Governor of the Camp," when his rival was made Captain-General of the forces. He insisted on having a larger stipend than that assigned to Vitelli; and the latter, who could only with much difficulty be persuaded to content himself with a sum equal to that allowed to Farnese, would not have tolerated for an instant that his rival should receive a larger amount. Yet the Signory found itself forced by the remonstrances of Farnese to increase his pay. And then Vitelli retired in sullen displeasure to his own Città di Castello on the banks of the Tiber; and the Signory was obliged to send after him an agent charged to offer him a similar increase of stipend, and to coax him back to the camp. For the fact was that Vitelli was a far more valuable and able man than Farnese; and unpopular and suspected as he was in Florence, the city could not do without him.

Other difficulties arose from the all but impossibility of obtaining a vote of money from the Great Council. The people were thoroughly disgusted with the conduct of the war, with the delay in obtaining any decisive result, and were sick of paying money for a purpose which they began to doubt of ever achieving. They were much angered, too, by the expense which had been incurred by this competitive raising of the stipends paid to their rival generals. The Council could not be got to elect a "Ten of War," or "Of Peace and Liberty," as it was now called. The government had, therefore, to call a "Pratica" of citizens, and itself administer the war by their assistance. But the Council voted against every demand for money. The citizens would agree to nothing. They only persisted in putting their white beans* into the urn, let the propositions of the government be what they might.†

* A white bean was negative, and a black bean affirmative in the Florentine ballot box.

† Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xix.

In May, 1499, however, Messer Francesco Gherardi came into office as Gonfaloniere, and, by his eloquence and skill in coaxing the citizens, at last succeeded in obtaining a vote of the necessary funds for the war. The money was sent off with all haste to the camp; and the first fruits of the renewed struggle was the almost immediate capture by Vitelli of the important position of Cascina and some other places in the immediate neighbourhood of Pisa, and around the mouth of the Arno.* A.D. 1499.

But even this victory, as Vitelli's ill star would have it, resulted in increasing the odium and suspicion in which he was held in Florence, instead of earning the gratitude and confidence of the citizens. It so happened that among the prisoners taken at Cascina was a certain Messer Rinieri della Sassetta, a feudal noble who had been one of the "*raccomandati*," or protected nobles of the Commonwealth, and, as was usually the case with such persons, a captain in the pay of the Republic. Now this man had deserted his colours, and had joined the Pisans;—had moreover been known to have made a journey to Milan; whence it was thought that, if, as many Florentines suspected, the Duke Ludovico had hidden and traitorous designs in his meddling between the Commonwealth and Pisa, this Rinieri was, in all probability, in the secret of them;—and lastly, was known to have instigated the Pisans not to accept the terms made for them by the Venetians. Under these circumstances the Signory were exceedingly anxious to have this prisoner in their hands; and sent immediately to Vitelli at the camp orders to send him to Florence, where he would have been subjected to examination under torture, and then undoubtedly put to death. The disappointment and indignation were great therefore in Florence, when the messengers came back

* Mecatti, op. cit., ad ann.

A.D. 1499. with the reply that he had escaped; in fact, that Vitelli, "not choosing to act as *Bargello* for the Signory," as Guicciardini says, and unwilling to send one of his own class to a dog's death at the hands of a knot of citizens, had let him go. But the Florentines in their anger concluded at once that Vitelli's motive in allowing him to escape was fear lest the examination of this Rinieri della Sassetta under torture should bring to light treasonable practices in which he himself might have been concerned.

Thus the suspicion and anger of the citizens against Vitelli, who had ever since the beginning of his engagement commanded the army successfully, and whose victories had been the main means of first compelling the Venetians to abandon their hold of Pisa, and now of hemming the Pisans within their own walls, continued to increase.

At last, on the 31st of July, 1499, Vitelli commenced the siege of Pisa; and on the 10th of August took the strong fortification called Stampace;—a success which once again the strange fatality that seemed to pursue Vitelli turned into a fatal misfortune to him. The loss of that important fortress so alarmed the Pisans, and produced such confusion in the city, that many of the leading men fled to Lucca; and if the advantage which had been thus obtained had been followed up, and the opportunity seized, it appeared not doubtful that Pisa might that day have fallen into the hands of the Florentines.* For a good eight or ten hours, as Guicciardini, who is a strong defender of all Vitelli's conduct, admits, this golden opportunity lasted. But the Pisans at the end of that time recovered themselves, and the chance had passed away: for Vitelli had, after the capture of Stampace, ordered his troops to halt. He had not intended to assault the walls

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xx.

that day, and does not appear to have possessed promptness enough to change his plans on the spur of the moment, for the seizing of the opportunity offered him. Possibly, as Guicciardini suggests, he was not aware of the degree of confusion and panic which prevailed in the city. At all events, the thought that was dominant in the minds of the Florentines was, that Pisa might have been taken; but that Vitelli had chosen to hold back his troops in the mid-career of victory, and the golden chance had been thus lost. A.D. 1499.

To make the matter worse, moreover, and more galling to the Florentines, it began to be seen that the army could not remain encamped before Pisa at that season of the year. The troops began to suffer greatly from the pestilential fevers caused by the malaria. Both the Commissaries at the camp fell ill, and one of them, Pietro Corsini, died. Francesco Gherardi and Paolantonio Soderini were immediately sent to supply their places; and they both fell ill in a few days. Luigi della Stufa and Pierantonio Bandini were sent next; and again both of them were struck down by the fever within a very short time. Piero Vespucci was despatched in their stead on a mission, which had in truth assumed the aspect of a forlorn hope; and he, too, before long had to return ill to Florence.

Meantime a breach in the wall of the city had been effected, which was judged by many in the camp to be sufficiently practicable to give good hope that an immediate assault would be successful. But Vitelli, without denying the validity of such an opinion, maintained that the course urged upon him would involve a great loss of life; and that by having the patience to wait for a few days till a larger breach should be made, the city would be taken certainly, and with very much less loss. He added that there could be no risk in suffering this short delay, as

A.D. 1499. under the present circumstances it was impossible to suppose that the position of the besieged could, within the time contemplated, be in any way improved. But he forgot what the fate of seven Commissaries in succession—of whom four died of the fever—should, it may be thought, have sufficiently impressed on him, that if the position of the enemy could not be improved while he deferred the assault, his own might well become seriously deteriorated. And the result was that during those days disease in the camp increased so rapidly and terribly, he himself being among those incapacitated by it, that it became absolutely necessary to withdraw the army in all haste from so fatal a position.

It may easily be imagined, when the burning desire and long-deferred hope of the Florentines to possess themselves of Pisa are borne in mind,—when the previous disposition of the public mind towards Vitelli is further remembered,—and when it is mentioned that Francesco Gherardi, the late Gonfaloniere, who was one of the Commissaries killed by the malaria, was at that moment the most popular man in Florence,—when all that it had cost the Commonwealth in money, in protracted efforts, in world-wide negotiations, in anxiety to achieve this object is counted up,—it will, I say, be easy to imagine the rage, the mortification, and almost the despair of the Florentines at this issue of all their hopes.

A new Signory came into office for September and October with Giovacchino Guasconi for Gonfaloniere; and Vitelli was urgent with the new government to be allowed then to lead the army back again to the attack. But the Signory, now thoroughly persuaded that he was false to their cause, refused to allow him this last chance. Piero Vespucci, the last of the seven Commissaries who had fallen victims to the pestilence, but who returned to Florence to recover, made a report to the government as

damaging to Vitelli as possible. The result was that a knot of leading citizens, among whom was Niccolò Machiavelli, persuaded the Signory to send orders to the Commissaries at Cascina to place the Captain-General in immediate arrest, and send him in safe custody to Florence. A.D. 1499.

It is not to be imagined that this was an order that could be openly and avowedly executed. The infallible sequence of such a step was too certain for the object of it to put his head into the noose, if any chance of avoiding it were afforded him. So the Commissaries sent to request Vitelli that he would attend a council of war at their quarters. He came unsuspecting, and was at once made prisoner. His younger brother Vitellozzo was also summoned; but a warning of the fate that was in store for him reached him in time, and instead of obeying, he escaped from the camp, and got off, as fast as his horse could carry him, to the family territory and stronghold of Città di Castello.

Conducted to Florence, Paolo Vitelli was at once subjected to examination under torture. No avowals of any sort were obtained from him; and repeated applications of worse and more insupportable torments were equally without result. His private secretary and another intimate friend were also placed on the rack, but no confession of any treasonable practices could be extracted from them. But "the Gonfaloniere and his colleagues being firm in the opinion that he was guilty,"* he was sentenced to be beheaded that same evening.

The above-cited historian had no doubt that he was innocent of the charges brought against him, and gives at length very conclusive reasons for so thinking.

Such was the death of the most able and renowned

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 210.

A.D. 1499. general of his day in Italy, and such the mode in which democratic Florence, having much prospect of the necessity of fighting before her, and entirely incapable of doing this fighting for herself, rewarded the successful service of her General, and declared to the world what those might expect who should be tempted to take her pay.

CHAPTER IX.

Louis XII. makes himself master of the Duchy of Milan—The Duke Ludovico flies to Germany—Policy of Florence doubtful—Agreement between Florence and France—Difficulty of raising money in Florence —New mode of taxation—The "Decima Scalata"—The Milanese invite Ludovico to attempt to regain his duchy—His first temporary success—Attempts at negotiation with Venice—with Florence—with the Pope—Ludovico is a second time defeated—and sent prisoner into France—French troops promised to aid Florence in recovering Pisa—French demands—Mutinous and scandalous conduct of the French troops before Pisa—The army broken up—All hope of taking Pisa at an end for the present—Progress of Cesare Borgia—Suspicions of the French king in Florence—Cesare Borgia at Campi, a few miles from Florence—Alarm and suspicions in Florence—Borgia's objects—Partially successful—Florence comes to agreement with him—Embittered feeling in Florence—French king's displeasure with Florence —He commands, however, Borgia to molest Florence no further—Secret treaty between France and Spain for the partition of Naples—New disagreements between Florence and France—Borgia again active against the Republic—Causes Arezzo to rebel—Ambassadors from Maximilian in Florence—Jealousy of the French king—Borgia again commanded by France to cease from molesting Florence—and compelled to restore Arezzo—Ill-government of the Commonwealth—Urgent need of reform—Arbitrary mode of raising money—Proposals for reform result in the appointment of a Gonfaloniere for life—Paolo Soderini elected—Fresh fears respecting Cesare Borgia—Combination of his generals against him—He murders them at Sinigaglia—He rapidly subdues the cities of central Italy—The Borgias could not expect further advancement from France—Quarrels break out between the Spanish and French in Naples—The Pope determines to break with France and attach himself to Spain—He sends support to Pisa —"Uffiziali di Guasto"—France has misgivings respecting the course to be taken by the Pope—News of the Pope's death on 18th August, 1503—Rejoicing at this event throughout Italy—The circumstances of the Pope's death—Ambitious projects of Cesare Borgia—All overthrown

by his father's death and his own illness—He loses all his dominions—is sent to Spain—and soon afterwards killed—Death of Pietro de' Medici.

A.D. 1499. But while this deed was being done at Florence events of much wider importance were being accomplished in the north of Italy. Louis XII. had crossed the Alps, and, in league with the Venetians, had in a very short space of time—like a thunderbolt, as one of the Italian historians says*—made himself master of all the Duchy of Milan, with the exception of Cremona and Ghiaradadda, which, by the terms of the convention Louis had made with the Venetians, fell to their share;—a territory, says Guicciardini† grudgingly, which brought in a hundred and fifty thousand ducats a year, and which was the third part of the whole Duchy of Milan. Louis, though tempted by the towns themselves, which would have preferred to remain attached to the duchy under the French crown to being handed over to the Venetians, refused to be untrue to his agreement with his allies.

Ludovico il Moro, after losing a battle near Alexandria, in which his troops under Messer Galeazzo di Sar Severino shamefully ran away at the first shock of the enemy, fled into Germany.

Florence, in the prospect of this new French invasion of the peninsula, had been extremely doubtful how to act. On the one hand the traditional policy of the Commonwealth had always been friendly towards France. This was the general tendency of the public mind in the city. Moreover, it was exceedingly important to avoid placing the Republic in an attitude of hostility to a French king who was from day to day expected to cross the Alps. On the other hand, King Louis was coming into Italy as the avowed enemy to the death of the Duke of Milan, and

* Mecatti, op. cit., ad ann. Conf. 1251.

† Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 217.

intent on seizing and appropriating his duchy. And Ludovico was not only at present the avowed and recognised ally of Florence, but his friendship was exceedingly necessary for the great object of the recovery of Pisa. The Florentine envoys at the French court had therefore constantly declined the proposals of Louis that the Republic should enter into league with him together with the Venetians against the Duke of Milan. A secret understanding, however, had been agreed to that Florence would not take any active step in opposition to the French king's designs in Italy. But after the flight of Ludovico, when the French armies were in Italy and already victorious, a treaty was, after much debate and negotiation, made between the Republic and the King, by which it was agreed that Louis should send a force to aid the Florentines to recover Pisa, and that Florence should pay to the King, as actual Duke of Milan, the money which was due to Ludovico, in repayment of the loans he had made to the Republic. Florence further bound herself to furnish the King with a certain contingent of men-at-arms and infantry, in case he should need them for the defence of Milan; and with four hundred men-at-arms and five thousand Swiss, or a sum equivalent to the pay of such a body for three months, in aid of his contemplated enterprise against Naples. A.D. 1500.

As usual, whatever the business in hand, it resulted in a fresh demand on the coffers of the Republic. And those coffers were not now replenished with the ease and rapidity with which they had been in former times. The first payment of the indemnity for the war expenses, to be paid by agreement to Venice, fell due, and was not paid for want of funds. The urgency of the necessity for replenishing the treasury was extreme. The popular Great Council, however, could not be prevailed on to assent to the imposition of any new tax. The Signory for the last two

A.D. 1500. months of 1499 had striven to get a vote of this kind passed in vain. And the Gonfaloniere for that period, Giovanni Battista Ridolfi, indignant at the result, had risen in his place, and, speaking with much excitement, said that if the citizens were minded to ruin the city, he and his colleagues would consent to no such course; and that if no other help was to be found they would suspend the payment of the interest on the public debt. After this threat the proposed new tax was put to the vote once again. And the result of Ridolfi's threat was that the majority against the motion was much larger than it had been before. So little were the people in a humour to be either threatened or cajoled into providing for the necessities of the country.

In the time of the succeeding Signory, however, that for the January and February of 1500, the new Gonfaloniere Francesco Pepi hit upon a method of obtaining the much needed funds at the expense of a small but wealthy minority of the citizens. The assessed tax on real property, called the Decima, had always been levied on all incomes alike. But it was now proposed to levy what was called a "decima scalata," that is to say, a tax rising in proportion to the largeness of the income to be taxed. Thus, a man possessing fifty ducats a year in real property, paid five to the tax-gatherer; while he who possessed three hundred paid, not thirty as he ought to have done, but between eighty and an hundred. So that, says Guicciardini,* supposing the tax to be imposed three or four times in the year, as was frequently the case, he who possessed fifty ducats a year would pay to the state in the course of the twelvemonth, a third or fourth part of his income; while the possessor of three hundred would in the same period be called on to pay to

* Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 221.

the tax-gatherer the whole revenue of his possessions. And as the multiplication was applied to still higher incomes, the man who possessed five or six hundred ducats a year of real property, was obliged to pay from one and a half to twofold the entire revenue. Yet this law was passed. It was popular, of course, with the poor. It was approved of by all those whose wealth was of the nature of personal property. And the victims of it,—the owners of large real property, were very few in number. Nevertheless, it was passed with some difficulty; and the style of argument that was used in the debate on the measure, may be estimated from a specimen, which Guicciardini has preserved,* and which is curious as an illustration of the democratic political economy of the time. A.D. 1500.

Messer Luigi Scarlatti, who was a member of the Signory, rose and spoke with much animation in favour of the measure. It was reasonable that the rich, he urged, should support the greater part of the public expense; and as for the complaint that they would thereby become impoverished, the way to avoid this was by lessening their expenses. "If the contributions required of them by the State were such as no longer to permit them to keep horses and servants, let them do as he did. Let them walk out to their villas on foot, and wait upon themselves." The historian supplies us also with a glimpse of the sort of feeling with which doctrines of this kind were listened to by the classes at whom they were aimed. "With words of this sort," writes Guicciardini,† "he heated himself in such sort that his speech was yet more disgusting and disgraceful than the proposition itself." Very disgusting no doubt to those who were thus mulcted of the entirety of their property. But the bill was passed nevertheless.

In the meantime, no sooner had Louis XII. returned

* Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 222.

† *Loc. cit.*

A.D. 1500. to France, than the Milanese, who had received the French with open arms, began to regret their former political condition, and to think that the change from the Italian Duke to the French King had been from bad to worse. Intrigues were, therefore, set on foot to induce Ludovico to return from Germany, and make an attempt to recover a territory whose people were eager to return to their allegiance. Ludovico came; and as no French force, save that which garrisoned the citadel of Milan, had been left to protect the recent French conquest, he succeeded in retaking possession of all that he had lost (save Cremona and La Ghiaradadda), which were in the hands of the Venetians, as quickly as it had been taken from him. Quite aware, however, that he should not be permitted to hold his Duchy in peace, he lost no time in making active preparations for defending it against the French. He strove to induce the Venetians, the Florentines, and the Pope, to join with him to keep the barbarians out of Italy. But in each case his efforts were in vain. He promised the Venetians that they should keep Cremona and La Ghiaradadda; but the Senate preferred keeping them without having to fight for them against France. He joined his applications to Florence with a request, that the money which he had lent the Republic in its great need, should be returned to him now in the time of his still more pressing necessity. But Florence had undertaken to pay these moneys to Louis XII. Her feeling towards Ludovico, notwithstanding all he had done for her latterly in helping her to the recovery of Pisa, and even while she was receiving those favours at his hands, was by no means friendly. Florence, like all the rest of Italy, thoroughly mistrusted the Duke of Milan, and feared him, even when he brought her gifts. For her part, she much preferred seeing France at Milan, especially as she now hoped to obtain the ardently desired restoration of Pisa from the French king.

So entirely did the conduct of the two great republics, A.D. 1500. —the democracy of Florence as well as the aristocracy of Venice,—which were at this period the most essentially Italian of all the communities of the Peninsula, show them to be uninfluenced by any spark of that *Italian* feeling, the existence of which it has been sought to trace throughout the mediæval history of Italy. So wholly and exclusively was the only love of country and of fatherland, which we can discover in those ages a strictly municipal sentiment. So completely has the unitarian and national patriotism of recent times been the growth and offspring of modern ideas, which had neither representatives nor ancestors in the mediæval civilization.

As for Ludovico's application to the Pope, the Holy Father was then receiving from the French king a beginning of payment for those "arduous and difficult" services he had rendered to Louis, in the shape of assistance towards attaining all he cared for, an establishment for his son Cesare in Romagna; and it was not likely that he should throw over all these bright hopes for the sake of a Quixotic enterprise in favour of an old friend.

So the swarthy Ludovick was left alone to face the power of France as best he might by the help of the Swiss and German army which he had been able to hire. Louis XII. had lost no time, when he heard of the Duke's return to Milan, in sending a sufficient force for the recovery of the territory which had been so quickly won, and so quickly lost by the French arms. There was small hope that Ludovico and his mercenaries would be able to hold their ground against the power of France. But he had not even such a chance as a fair fight might have given him. For the Swiss in his army sold him to the Swiss in the pay of the French king. And Ludovico escaping from the field, on which his hired soldiers refused to fight, on to the Venetian territory, was given up

A.D. 1500. by the Venetian government into the hands of Louis, and by him carried prisoner into France, where after ten years passed in the prison of Loches in Tourraine, he died.*

At Florence the rejoicing over the French success was great. Now at last, the citizens thought, we shall reap the reward of our well-timed adherence to the King's cause, and of the punctuality with which we have, difficult as it was to do it, discharged the money engagements we assumed towards him. Now our great ally is at leisure to help us; he will send his victorious troops, and Pisa will at last be ours.

Louis professed himself to be ready to do all he had promised. He was ready to dispatch a large army,—a larger army indeed than seemed necessary for the purpose,—into Tuscany to the siege of Pisa;—Florence, it is to be understood, of course, finding the monthly pay and rations for the troops.

More money wanted! More difficulty with the Great Council in raising it! What need of all these soldiers! Fifteen hundred more than we had calculated on or asked for! But we cannot affront our great friend by refusing to take the aid he offers us. One more struggle, and Pisa is ours! So Florence groans and pays. A century earlier she paid and laughed.

One month's pay is distributed to the troops, officers and soldiers in Lombardy. But they do not begin their march. Some small matters of the King's business, to be attended to first all the necessary arrangements not yet completed. But we are paying all the time—paying out the last ducats squeezed out from our people with such difficulty! The Florentine "loggie" heard the wailing and the accurate computations how much Florence was

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, cap. 21; Mecatti, op. cit. Conf. 1253.

squandering from day to day. But of course the burghers understood courtly breeding too well to make such complaints heard in royal ears. A.D. 1500.

The whole month thus wore away. Now the army is ready, absolutely quite ready to march. But it is the end of the month! Quite impossible for the troops to move without another month's pay in hand. Fresh debating, almost despairing this time, in the Florentine council halls. Had we better give it up? Are they not merely cheating us and laughing at us in their sleeves all the time? We are going deeper and deeper into expense; and where is the money to come from?

But no! Florence *could* not give up the hope of recovering Pisa! Though with terrible misgiving, half suspecting that they were being defrauded, it was determined that the money for the second month's pay should be sent. It was sent; and the French army put itself in movement towards Pisa: passing by Lucca, the French demanded that the city and the fortress should be delivered into their hands. There was great tumult in Lucca;—the governors of the little Republic inclining to yield, while the people would have resisted. The former counsel prevailed; and the French were put into possession of Lucca. At last the army arrived before Pisa; and it was now June. Luca degli Albizzi was there as Commissary for the Republic, ready to receive possession of the city the instant our invincible friends from beyond the Alps shall have conquered it for us.

But the army, though quite ready to take Pisa, protested against being expected to do so on an empty stomach. And they loudly complained that the victuals provided were insufficient. Guicciardini admits that, taking into calculation the quantity which that sort of people might be expected to consume, and to waste, the provision made was not sufficiently abundant. The result

A.D. 1500. was that the camp became a scene of confusion, plundering, and almost mutiny. The Gascons in the army, whose time of service dated from nine days later than that of the Swiss, insisted that no account should be taken of this difference. Two pay days in the same camp, they said, was a thing unheard of. And when the unhappy Commissary demurred to this demand, they marched off in dudgeon to Lucca. "Nor, though messengers were sent after them to recall them, would they come back; so that the camp thus diminished had to be broken up as if it had suffered a defeat, to the great tarnishing of their reputation." * As the troops were on the point of breaking up, a company of Swiss just arrived, as free lances looking for employment on their own account, seized Messer Luca degli Albizzi, the Commissary, "like unreasoning beasts," insisting that a month's pay should be given to them too! And it was absolutely necessary to give them their thirteen hundred ducats before he could escape from their hands! Then all the Swiss insisted upon having return pay, for the journey back to their own homes "according to the custom of their country;"—in no wise changed, as the traveller knows, to the present day. And the Florentines thought it very hard that they should be called upon to pay for the homeward journey of men who had done them no service whatever.

And so ended for the present all hope of getting possession of Pisa;—the results of all the long planning and negotiation, which had culminated in this disgraceful failure, being a vast waste of money, a disagreeable series of disputes and recriminations with the French king, and a coldness with him arising out of them.†

Nevertheless, as Louis XII. was not a monarch to allow a passing offence or a misunderstanding of this kind to

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. p. 228.

† *Ibid.*, cap. 21.

interfere with the policy adopted with a view to far more important ends, the Republic was indebted to him the following year for its liberation from a great danger. A.D. 1501.

The hopes and schemes of Cesare, and the ambition of his Papal Father for him, have been already mentioned. By the assistance of the French king, purchased by Alexander as has been seen, Cesare Borgia had begun his dynasty-founding operations very successfully. The ex-Cardinal, removed from the Sacred College by his father, on the score of his illegitimacy, in order that he might succeed to the position of the brother he had murdered, had, after being rejected as a son-in-law by the King of Naples, found a noble wife in France, in the person of a daughter of the House of Alibret, who were connected with the blood royal of France. He had acquired by that marriage the title of Duc de Valentinois, and is henceforward generally known in Italian history as "Il Valentino." By the assistance of French troops he had overpowered the garrisons of Caterina Sforza (whose fall thus nearly coincided in time with that of the head of her house), and seized her towns of Imola and Forli. Far from being contented however with such small matters, he was now engaged in an attempt to oust the Signor of Piombino from his dominions, and was asking from the Florentines permission for his troops to pass through their territory for this purpose. But there was much in his conduct that gave rise to a suspicion, which was, there can be little doubt, well founded, that Cesare Borgia had schemes of wider scope in his head, than the mere acquisition of the little lordship of Piombino. There were indications that, while he was ready to take advantage of any opportunity that might be opened to him by the unsettled state of Tuscany, he specially had conceived the idea of making himself lord of Pisa.

In truth the position of Florence, after the terrible

A.D. 1501. disappointment at Pisa, and the breaking up of the army in a manner so discreditable to all the parties concerned, was at the beginning of the year 1501 such as to justify alarm on more than one account. Cesare Borgia, supported by the arms of France, and by the large and well commanded army of "condottiere" troops, which he had succeeded in gathering together, had with extraordinary rapidity and ease driven out the Lords of Pesaro and Rimini, and appropriated their possessions. Pandolfo Malatesta at Rimini, and Giovanni Sforza at Pesaro, had both fled at his approach. Astorre Mafredi at Faenza had essayed resistance. But Faenza had been taken by perfidy, and Astorre had been murdered under circumstances the atrocity of which will not bear recounting. It may be safely asserted that there does not exist a man in Europe at the present day, who would dare to avow himself the supporter, and to unite his fortunes with those of such a man as Cesare Borgia. But at the beginning of the sixteenth century he was so popular a chieftain that he had attracted to his standard all the most renowned Italian captains of the age. Gian Paolo Baglioni of Perugia, Vitellozzo Vitelli, of Città di Castello, he who had escaped when his brother was so unjustly and infamously put to death by the Florentines, and who was now of course the enemy of Florence to the death, and Paolo Orsini, all fought under his standard.

On the other hand, it was but too strongly suspected at Florence, that no confidence was to be placed in the friendship of the French king. It is probable that the suspicions of the citizens outran the truth in this respect. They were very much inclined to believe that all the disaster at Pisa had been intended by the King and brought about in accordance with his will. But there is no reason to suppose that this was the case. That the King, after the disaster had happened, irritated at the slur

which had been cast on the French arms, and provoked at the ill-timed parsimony of the Commonwealth, which had utterly refused to furnish another month's pay, and allow Louis another opportunity of performing his promise, and his troops another chance of redeeming their character, had sought to cast the whole of the blame on the imperfect arrangements of the Florentine Commissaries, and had shown himself angry against the city, is doubtless true. But the sequel of this page of the history shows that Louis had no thought of behaving traitorously towards the Commonwealth. A.D. 1501.

Under these circumstances, when Borgia, having Vitellozzo Vitelli and Orsini with him, and what was much worse, having left Pietro de' Medici at a village in the Apennines called Lojano, on the road between Bologna and Florence, came as far as Campi in the Val d'Arno, some half-dozen miles only from the walls, the agitation in the city was very great. It was a very ominous conjunction this of Cesare Borgia and Pietro de' Medici. And the citizens might well be alarmed. But as usual suspicions, of which it is impossible to say how far they were well or ill-founded, followed instantly on the feeling of alarm. That Pietro de' Medici had not come to Lojano, and in such company, for nothing, was very certain. But the Florentine mind forthwith rushed to the conclusion, that, whatever the plot that was being hatched might be, it was not planned without the concurrence and connivance of Medicean friends within the walls. The generation of such inevitable suspicions was always one of the main objects of such attempts, and of course one of the main elements of their possible success. If those at home, whose antecedents rendered them liable to suspicions, had been innocent of any complicity in such schemes, they were made to feel that their position in the city had been rendered dangerous, perhaps utterly un-

A.D. 1501. tenable; and that their safest course, and best prospect, was to assist in bringing about a revolution, which would place them in a position to suspect, watch, and trample upon others, instead of being themselves the objects of suspicion and persecution.

The object and meaning, therefore, of such approaches to the city as that now made by Borgia, with the Medici in his train, was to try whether the agitation, which was sure to be produced within the walls by the vicinity of such persons, would manifest itself in any turbulence or outbreak, which might give opportunity for one of those violent and sudden changes in the government of the city, of which the mediæval history of the Italian Communes has such numberless examples. Failing this, it was also possible that advantageous terms might be made with the citizens for the withdrawal of a presence, which in any case was incompatible with the tranquillity of the city and the security of its *de facto* government.

In the first object the present tentative failed; for the city made no sign. In the second it succeeded very notably. "Ambassadors" were sent to Borgia at the suburban village of Campi, by means of whose negotiations it was agreed that Borgia should at once withdraw himself and his soldiers from the territory of the Republic, without doing more mischief than the considerable amount he had done already; and that in consideration of his forbearance, Florence should appoint him, Cesare Borgia, her Captain-General for three years, with a stipend of thirty thousand ducats a-year; and that she should dismiss from his prison in Florence Messer Cerbone, the secretary of the Vitelli, who had been made prisoner at the time of the arrest of Paolo Vitelli. "Ambassadors" were also appointed to attend upon Borgia on his march, in order to provide suitably for the wants of himself and his army, as long as they were on the territory of the Republic;—in

other words, to see him safe out of it,—to prevent him, as far as possible, from injuring the country through which he marched, and to take care that the black mail administered to him, under the above specious title, was not altogether thrown away. But for all that, says Guicciardini,* and notwithstanding all the care that could be taken, his people did a vast deal of mischief to our country. A.D. 1501.

Nevertheless, this approach of Borgia to the city had not failed in embittering, to a great extent, the party jealousies and mistrust, which were at any moment ready to be awakened into active mischief in Florence;—feelings, which rose to such excess upon the present occasion, that they manifested themselves by the "infamy" of "painting execution blocks and a gallows"† on the house of Piero Soderini, a man suspected of Medicean sympathies. No laughing matter, when it is remembered, that such paintings were a direct and most dangerous incitement to the populace to sack, burn, and murder.

It was another source of uneasiness to the government, that there was ground for suspicion that this march of Borgia had been undertaken with the connivance, and perhaps by the instigation of, the French king. The money due according to the terms of the agreement made at Milan, had not been punctually paid. The King had been very angry;—had "blackguarded"‡ our ambassador at his court with many harsh words; and had given us reason to think that he had chosen "this stick—Borgia—to beat us with." And this was the consideration, that obliged us to consent to the engagement of Borgia thus forced on us, on terms that it was out of the question for us to observe, both because the sum of money was excessive, and because we could not put any confidence in him.

* Storia Fioren., op. ined., vol. iii. p. 242. † Guicciardini, *ibid.*
‡ "svillaneggiato." Guic., *ibid.*

A.D. 1501. But the King got his money. And his Majesty becoming thereupon "sweetened down a little,"* ordered Borgia not to molest us any further.

For the moment Borgia obeyed; marched against Piombino, took it on the 3rd of September, 1501, and then followed the French army in its march against Naples.

Meantime, in November, 1500, Louis XII. had concluded a secret treaty with Ferdinand, king of Spain, whom Frederick of Aragon, king of Naples, supposed to to be his friend and ally, by which it was agreed that Ferdinand and Louis should join in ousting Frederick, and should divide the kingdom of Naples between them; —a compact dishonourable enough on the part of the French king, but infamously perfidious on the part of the Spaniard,—which resulted in a completely successful execution of the iniquitous scheme. Frederick was very quickly conquered, and sent away into France; and his kingdom partitioned between the spoilers, Calabria and the Abruzzi being assigned to Spain, and the remainder of the territory to France.

The "sweetness" of Louis towards the Commonwealth did not last long however. Again the sums due to him by agreement had not been paid; nor had the fifty thousand ducats, which Florence had promised to contribute towards the expenses of the expedition against Naples, been forthcoming. In vain the ambassadors of the Republic represented that this money was only payable on the recovery of Pisa, which had not been effected. The king being judge and party in the dispute, as Guicciardini says, would hear nothing; and his Majesty's face was very black towards us. Our ambassadors danced attendance on the Cardinal de Rohan, who was understood to be all-powerful with the King;—followed him from one

* "addolcito." Guic. vol. iii. p. 242.

place to another;—were put off, and befooled;—were discourteously treated by the King in the presence of all the court;—"could not get one good word from him in eight months!" And what was worst of all, he admitted Giuliano de' Medici to long audiences the while, and treated him in public with all sorts of caresses! For *he* could promise large sums of money, and give security for them too, by means of his brother the Cardinal, and the Roman bankers. A.D. 1502.

And the result of all this was soon seen in the renewed vexations and troubles arising from the machinations of Borgia and his captains. In June, 1502, Arezzo rose in rebellion against the Commonwealth, at the instigation of Vitellozzo Vitelli, eager to revenge his brother's death; and within a very short time Monte San Sovino, Castiglione, Aretino, Cortone, and nearly the whole district of the Val-di-Chiana, had joined the rebellion. As usual, the danger and the ill-effect on the popular mind at Florence were increased tenfold by hearing that Pietro and Giuliano de' Medici were at Arezzo. It was impossible not to see that Florence was in great danger. She was without an army, her finances in great disorder, her treasury exhausted, she had not a friend in Italy, or out of it, unless the French king would forgive her, and show her once again the light of his countenance.

But once again, as it has so frequently happened in the course of this history, a circumstance arose which, in the nick of time, operated to the salvation of the city from the imminent peril which threatened it. King Louis and the Emperor Maximilian had attempted to come to an understanding on various points of interest, mainly concerning the settlement of affairs in Italy, and to make a league between them. But the failure of this hope, arising from renewed disputes between them, had left them more ill-disposed towards each other than before. Maximilian therefore

A.D. 1502. sent ambassadors to Florence, who were very courteously welcomed, remained there several days, and received a promise, that in case the Emperor should go to Rome, to receive the imperial crown, the city would contribute thirty thousand ducats towards the expense of the expedition, as an admission of the feudal rights of the Empire over Florence. The news of this visit of the Imperial ambassadors, of course, very soon reached the King of France, and produced in his mind a determination to treat the Florentines with rather more favour than he had lately been doing. It would not have at all suited him that the Commonwealth should be driven into breaking with him altogether, and throwing itself into the arms of the Emperor. So Borgia received once more an order to cease from all molestation against the Republic. He replied, that all that had been done was by no fault of his, but was entirely the work of Vitellozzo Vitelli and Orsini, the first anxious to avenge the death of his brother, and the latter desirous of restoring his kinsmen the Medici.*

Louis, however, sent a body of troops into southern Tuscany; and it was understood that his Majesty was forthwith coming into Italy in person, "with his mind quite made up to save us, and put down our enemies, and in a very bad humour with the Pope and the Duke Valentino"† (Cesare Borgia). The arrival of those troops caused much rejoicing in the city, though we had great difficulty in providing victuals for them; and the quantity which the French consumed and wasted was amazing. And yet we had to take care that there was plenty, otherwise there would have been great danger, lest, being brutal‡ and hot-headed men as they were—(not docile, and content with a morsel of bread and an onion, like our

* Mecatti, op. cit. ad. ann. 1502, Conf. 1268.

† Guicciardini, Storia. Fior., op. ined., vol. iii. p. 265.

‡ "Sendo nomini bestiali ed impazienti," Guicc., loc. cit.

Tuscans), they might have thrown everything into confusion. "However, by ardent strength of will all difficulties (even those of feeding to their content these voracious Frenchmen) were overcome." A.D. 1502.

The French, however, if they were terrible at table, were equally so in the field. Arezzo yielded almost immediately after their appearance before it, and was by order of Borgia surrendered by Vitelli to the French. The Florentines were much disgusted because it was not given up to them, remembering what had occurred in the case of Pisa. And when the city was very shortly afterwards given up to them, together with all the other places and districts which had been raised in rebellion against them, by the orders of King Louis, which Borgia, however much he longed to do so, dared not disobey, they were still discontented, because they were not allowed to punish the Arezzo people, as they desired to do.

But once again the city was thus liberated from its immediate fears, and from a position that had in truth much of very serious danger in it; and this liberation, it could not be denied, was due to the King of France. Nothing now remained of all the troubles which had pressed the State so hardly, save the unaccomplished task of recovering Pisa. For the present, however, there did not seem any immediate probability that this undying desire of the Florentine heart would be gratified. The city was very far from being in a fit condition to undertake any such enterprise by its own unaided efforts.

"It is difficult to imagine," says Guicciardini,* "a city so thoroughly shattered and ill-regulated as ours was at that time." During the period of urgent difficulty and danger in the foreign affairs of the Commonwealth, which had just elapsed, the government of the country had been

* Storia Fiorent. op. ined., vol. iii. p. 172.

A.D. 1502. carried on in a series of violent jerks and jolts, as it were, produced by the irregular effort necessary for meeting each new difficulty as it arose. It had been thus carried on very far from satisfactorily, and had brought the city through its troubles rather by a series of lucky accidents, especially that last, of the timely jealousy between the French king and the Emperor, than by any merit or ability of the rulers. Indeed, the most able and best qualified men in the State were beginning to refuse to take part in the government—a new phenomenon in Florence, and one of very evil augury. Men of no note, or talents, or experience, were sent out as Commissaries and Ambassadors, because their betters would not accept these charges, if they could possibly avoid them.

Guicciardini has a long passage* in which he sets forth in detail the causes that had led to this state of things. The one great cause to which all his observations point may, however, be stated in very few words. If Guicciardini was right, the root of the mischief was to be found in the too unmixedly democratic constitution of the State. To this in fact, and to the jealously suspicious temper fostered by it, was due the absurd shortness of the time for which each successive Signory remained in office; the statute which imposed a long absence from office on those who had served, and the direct interference of the Great Council in all the affairs of government. It has been sometimes thought that the democratic tendencies of our own constitution, which give to a body so constituted as our own House of Commons the right to ask questions on and interfere with matters of pending foreign policy, have untowardly interfered with the successful action of the executive power. But though the Great Council of Florence was in fact a much less democratically constituted body

* Storia Fiorent. chap. xxv.

than our House of Commons, inasmuch as it consisted in reality of a certain caste of citizens, instead of being elected to represent all those who are governed by it, yet its operation partook far more largely of all the vices of an unmixedly democratic assembly. No minister or member of the Signory in Florence would have been permitted to decline answering a question put to him, on the ground that he deemed it inconsistent with the interest of the State to do so. Nothing could be concealed from the Great Council, that is to say, from all the world. And Guicciardini particularly enumerates among the evils which had brought the State to the lamentable condition he describes, the unwillingness of foreign princes and governments to have any dealings with a government which was under the necessity of telling everything it knew to all the world. A.D. 1502.

Another very interesting and instructive consequence of the operation of the Great Council was a disorder and series of difficulties in the financial affairs of the Commonwealth, disclosing a state of things under which it seems to modern ideas wonderful that a civil government could have been carried on at all. And here again the contrast is very notable between, on the one hand, the regulation and control over the public revenue exercised by a representative system, which, corresponding exactly with no one ideal of such a frame of constitution, balances itself between the extreme results to which any ideal, if consistently carried out, would push it, and thus gradually adapts itself to the stage of social progress reached by the community it governs, and on the other hand the financial legislation of such a body as the Great Council of Florence. For in all the proceedings of this body, during this period of great financial difficulty, it is impossible to discover either reasonable economy or reasonable liberality, either patriotic parsimony or patriotic generosity of expenditure. The

A.D. 1502. granting or refusing of the supplies asked for by the government seems to have been regulated very capriciously by the good or ill humour of the citizens, by the condition of their own purses at the moment, by their personal feelings towards the members of the Signory. The general tendency during the period in question was to refuse all money votes, with very little regard to the obligations which the State had taken upon itself. And the consequence was that the Signory were driven to raise money by means wholly incompatible with the protracted continuance of a free form of government. Rich citizens were arbitrarily required to lend money to the State, and were in very many instances held under arrest until they consented to do so.* Guicciardini, indeed, represents this to have been an almost everyday occurrence at this period.

The absolute necessity of some measure of reform had been making itself very generally felt for some months past. The most obvious remedy was to contract the democratic largeness of the existing constitution. And of course the leading citizens, the men of the great families, all those, in short, into whose hands the power would have fallen if any oligarchical modification had been adopted, were all in favour of a reformation, which they represented to be merely a return to those old constitutional forms under which the Commonwealth had undeniably known better times than it had recently experienced. But the Great Council was filled with men of a class which had recently for the first time found the honours and emoluments of the State within its reach. And though it was impossible for these men not to feel and admit that matters were going very badly, and that there was urgent need of some radical change, yet they were exceedingly unwilling to seek the

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxv.

required remedy in a reform which they feared would reconsign them to the obscurity from which they had emerged only after the sweeping democratic measures brought about by Savonarola. A.D. 1502.

At last, however, matters became so bad, and the critical position of the Commonwealth during this last rebellion at Arezzo and throughout the southern part of Tuscany had so much alarmed the citizens of every class, that all began to perceive and admit the necessity of some modification of the existing constitution. It was seen by all men that, as Guicciardini * phrases it, "if no better form of government could be found, the city was drawing near its end." The general cry, therefore, among that majority of the Great Council which had been most averse to change for fear of seeing themselves altogether excluded from office and power, was that something must be done;—anything, so that only the Great Council was not touched, and a thorough oligarchy introduced. It was proposed that a council of from forty to a hundred citizens should be elected, with large executive and legislative powers for life. But it was feared that the people would not be persuaded to consent to this; and further, that the action of such a board would be paralysed by differences and jealousies such as those which had brought "the Twenty" appointed after the exile of Pietro de' Medici to a dead lock. It was suggested that a Gonfaloniere should be appointed for some much longer period than the two months which had hitherto been the term of that office, or for life. Much discussion took place on the question, which of these two schemes were the better. And at last, partly from the disconcerted machinations of those who wished to throw out the measure altogether, but mainly from two considerations—firstly, that a Gonfaloniere for life, having

* Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxv.

A.D. 1502. nothing further or higher to hope for in the city, would be less likely to pervert the power and influence in his hands to objects of personal ambition; and secondly, that quitting his position only with his life, he would not be exposed to fear, when he should have returned to a private station, the vengeance of those whom it might be his duty to punish when in office, the creation of a Gonfaloniere for life was at last proposed by the Signory, confirmed by the Board of Eighty, and passed in the Great Council. And the election fell on Pietro Soderini, a citizen of mature age, of noble family, of unblemished character, and who had what was felt to be the further strong recommendation of being childless.*

Pietro Soderini, therefore, entered on this office as Gonfaloniere for life on the 1st of November, 1502.

And about the same time the ever-shifting aspect of public affairs in Italy began again, after a few months of comparative security, to cause uneasiness in Florence. The French king had in July commanded Borgia and the lords of the several cities who fought under his banner,—specially Vitellozzo Vitelli of Città di Castello, the Orsini, and Paolo Baglione of Perugia,—to restore Arezzo and all the other Tuscan cities which they had raised in revolt against Florence, and to withdraw from the territory of the Republic. And this had been done. But it was rumoured in Florence that the Pope and his son Cesare, and the band of brigand princes who acted more or less with them and under their orders, had been heard to say, when they were compelled unwillingly to drop the bones they had got between their teeth in July, that there would soon be an opportunity for worrying Florence, when France should not be near enough, nor could arrive in time enough, to protect her. It had been hoped in Florence

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxv.

that when the King returned to France he would take Cesare Borgia with him. But Louis had crossed the Alps; Borgia had accompanied him as far as Asti, but had then returned. And Florence, without an army or the means of raising one, was in no little anxiety as to what this lawless and insatiably ambitious Pope's son might next attempt. It was all very well for the King to command him to abstain from molesting Florence, as long as the King was on that side of the Alps to enforce his commands. But it was felt in Florence that if he were to attempt anything which should assume the aspect of a completed fact before he could be prevented from doing it, it would be easy to induce the French king to consider bygones to be bygones, as, says Guicciardini, it is the nature of the French to do. A.D. 1502.

But in the midst of these doubts and fears a new complication arose, which in some degree contributed to restore a feeling of security in Florence. This was a suddenly avowed, though not suddenly conceived, enmity between Borgia and the tyrant lords, his tools and subordinates. His unprincipled perfidy was so notorious, his ambition so insatiable, and his success had been so great, that each of these accomplices in his past spoliations began to fear that he might be the next to be devoured. Vitelli, therefore, and Baglione, and Orsini, Pandulfo Petrucci of Siena, Oliverotto, the little tyrant of Fermo, and Guidobaldo, the dispossessed Duke of Urbino, had a meeting in the district of Perugia, and formed an avowed league for the protection of each and all of them against their late general, and for the restoration of the dispossessed Signors of the cities of Romagna.

The first step taken by the confederates was to march into the Duchy of Urbino, which with very little difficulty they restored to Duke Guidobaldo. Borgia and the Pope were much alarmed. They sent messengers in all haste to

A.D. 1502. France to ask for assistance, and in the meantime, before any reply to that application could be expected, they proposed an offensive and defensive alliance to the Commonwealth. Proposals of the same kind had, however, also been made by the other party, including offers of assistance in the matter of Pisa. But Florence, feeling it to be very doubtful on which of two such entirely untrustworthy supports it was most advisable to lean, and which of such thoroughly unscrupulous ruffians it was least dangerous to have for an enemy, determined to temporize till it should be seen what France would say or do in the matter.

It was thought * that if the confederate captains had, after their success at Urbino, pushed on at once against the cities occupied by Borgia in Romagna, they might, in all probability, have inflicted on him a very damaging defeat, if not entirely crushed him. But they lost much time. And before they were ready to make any further movement, Borgia was prepared to defend himself; and King Louis had sent orders to his General in Milan to use the French forces there in any way that might be necessary for his support. The confederates saw that their chance was gone, that the game was a hopeless one; and that their only chance of safety lay in making their submission, and coming to terms with Borgia. They did so; their submission and excuses were apparently well received; but the result was that too well-known monster deed of treachery and cold-blooded cruelty with which the world has rung ever since. Lulling their suspicions by an appearance of perfect reconciliation, he induced the principal members of the late hostile confederation to meet him at Sinigaglia, a small city on the coast of the Adriatic, a few miles to the north of Ancona; and there laying

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxvi.

hands on them as soon as ever they were in his power, he caused them to be strangled one after the other, on the 26th of December, 1502. A.D. 1503.

Paoli Baglione of Perugia was not among them. He had not gone to Sinigaglia, and thus escaped sharing their fate.

Borgia lost no time in gathering the fruits of his horrible treachery. First he marched his army against Città di Castello, and made himself master of it without any difficulty. Next he seized Perugia, from which Baglione, feeling himself too weak to resist him, fled. Then he marched to Siena, whence he caused the citizens to banish Pandulfo Petrucci; but finding them disposed to defend their walls, abstained from attacking them. Of course this very considerable extension of the power and influence of such a man as Borgia, with his vices and his capacities,—for there is no doubt that this monster of wickedness was a very able, active, and energetic military leader,—caused serious uneasiness to the other states of the peninsula, especially to those smaller independent communities of central Italy, and to the great Commonwealth itself, which, in its present condition, wholly dependent for any military necessity on hireling troops, with no one of the great Captains of the day available, and with the unaccomplished task of recovering Pisa before it, would hardly have been able,—or rather, it may be said, would assuredly not have been able, if left to its own resources,—to resist the power which Cesare Borgia was able to bring against it. He was now lord of Imola, Forli, Faenza, Rimini, Pesaro, with some other smaller Signories in Romagna, of the Duchy of Urbino, of Camerino, Fermo, with a great part of the territory of the March of Ancona, of Perugia, Piombino, Città di Castello, Pitigliano, and the other lordships of the Orsini. Each one of these cities and dominions, as here enumerated,

A.D. 1503. had been taken by him from as many different princes by conquest and by treachery. Many of the former possessors had been murdered by him in various manners, and on different occasions. And no one of those who remained was in a position calculated to leave them any hope of recovering their possessions.

All this may be said to have been the price of the scandalous dispensation granted by Alexander to Louis XII., permitting him to put away his own wife and marry the widow of his cousin,—of "that arduous and difficult" piece of Papal handiwork, which had to be paid for by placing the arms of France at the service of a cause, and of men, whom history still considers as the worst the world has ever seen. But having backed the ambitious schemes of the Borgias thus far, it had been made clear to them that Louis did not intend to do more. In the case of the attempts Borgia had made on Bologna, in that of Arezzo, and his other schemes for getting a footing in Tuscany, the French king had very decidedly said, No! And Borgia had been in each case obliged to relinquish his prey. Nothing more, therefore, was to be hoped for from the goodwill of France. And a new change in the position of Italian affairs seemed to promise that further promotion could only be hoped from attaching the Borgia fortunes to those of a rival potentate.

The kings of France and of Spain had divided between them, as has been said, the kingdom of Naples. But it was scarcely possible that such an arrangement should fail to produce mutual encroachment and quarrelling between them. The French being at first far superior in numbers to the Spanish, over-ran nearly the whole of Calabria. But the Spanish king having sent strong reinforcements into Naples under Consalvi, who is known in the history of the period as "The Great Captain," and who was probably in fact the greatest soldier of his day,

the result, after some fruitless attempts at negotiation, was a very severe defeat inflicted on the French by the Spanish forces; and within a few days afterwards the expulsion of the French from Naples, and the whole of the kingdom, with the sole exception of Gaeta, where a portion of the French army found a refuge. Under these circumstances the Borgias, father and son, decided, though not without some fears and doubts (for Louis still held Milan, and the name of France, diminished as the power of it was by these reverses, was still a word of fear among the princes of Italy), to cast in their lot with Spain. A.D. 1503.

One of the immediate results of this change of policy on the part of the Borgias was the sending of assistance to the Pisans, to support them against the new efforts made to bring them to subjection by devastating the surrounding country, from which they drew their supplies. This policy had been carried out so systematically by Florence, that a new board had been created for the purpose of superintending these operations, called "*Uffiziali di Guasto*," or "officers of devastation." The devastation committed under this superintendence, assisted by a small body of French troops, under the Bailli d'Occan,* was as complete as could be desired. But it failed of producing exactly the results hoped from it, because Borgia found the means of sending supplies into the city by sea. So that, "although there was much scarcity and difficulty of living in Pisa, yet their obstinacy was such, that we could not avoid the conviction, that they would endure anything rather than return to their obedience to the Commonwealth; and that neither difficulties nor scarcity, but only hard necessity and sheer force, could bring them to it." †

In the meantime, France had been preparing a powerful

* Hardly recognisable under Guicciardini's "uomo chiamato il Bali di Cane."—Storia Fiorent. chap. xxvii.

† Guicciardini, Storia Fiorent., op. ined., vol. iii. p. 299.

A.D. 1503. army of fifteen hundred French lances, and fifteen thousand Swiss infantry, under De la Tremouille,* for the recovery of the lost kingdom of Naples. Spain on her side was no less active; and as the coming struggle promised to be a hardly contested one, Louis was very anxious to know what part the Borgias were likely to take. Alexander, however, who, as has been seen, had made up his mind to throw over the French alliance, which had done so much for him, could not be persuaded by French ambassadors to pronounce himself clearly. Messenger after messenger brought tidings, which only served to increase the French king's misgivings. At last one, who is said to have ridden from Rome to Macon, where Louis then was, in four days,† brought the all-important news that Alexander had died on the 18th of August, 1503.

Yes; Alexander was dead; and the world relieved from that portentous spectacle of successful and triumphant wickedness, which has in every subsequent age been a stumbling-block in the way of narrow-visioned speculators on the divine governance of the world. He was a man whose fleshly vices were of a kind that degraded him to a level far lower than that of the brute creation, and render the thought of him absolutely loathsome to mankind, which is usually, and not unreasonably, indulgent to frailties arising from the natural passions and appetites of humanity. And he was endowed with intelligence sufficient to be capable of every spiritual depravity which man's imagination could heap together as the appropriate equipment for a supposed eternal principle of evil in its undying fight against every form of good;—intellect sufficient for this, but insufficient to enable him to form any conception or theory of the world in which he lived, of the great office he disgraced, or of the God whose vicegerent he was, with

* "Monsignore di Tramojà," as Guicciardini calls him.

† Henri Martin, Hist. de France, vol. viii. p. 422.

unspeakable blasphemy and monstrosity, supposed to be, than such as was based on the lowest, basest, and other narrowest notions of the nature of good and evil. But this man was the most able to be made Pope of the Universal Church in his day; and not only so, but was, as Guicciardini * says, though "the worst yet the most fortunate Pope that the world had seen for many ages." A.D. 1503.

A most fortunate Pope! That was the judgment of the age, which made him Pope. But surely there is no need to fear lest the monstrous phenomenon should "break Heaven's design!" Even those, who are most impressed with the fact of their inability to scan the scope of that design, need not refuse to recognize the services evidently rendered to the cause of human progress by the existence of such a Pontiff. The blazing scandal of such a man's occupancy of such a position, flung a serviceable light far and wide over the nations, which the less useful decency and even virtues of subsequent Popes were insufficient to quench. Pope Alexander did much to force forward the throes of that painful reformation-birth with which Europe was heaving. Nor are the uses of him even yet exhausted. It is something in that last decisive battle of mankind against priestly tyranny, for which the call to arms is even now sounding, while I write, that there should have been such a Pope as Alexander. It is something that the baleful power, from which mankind is about once and for evermore to escape, comes to the contest weighted with the damning and irrefutable fact of this man's presence in her Apostolic line of accepted vicegerents of God on earth, and sacred transmitters of infallible truth.

Fortunate, as his contemporaries believed him to be, they felt and admitted that the manner of his death was characteristically worthy of him. He and his son Borgia

* Storia Fiorentina, op. ined., vol. iii. p. 301.

A.D. 1503. had plotted to remove by poison sundry Cardinals of whose wealth they wished to obtain possession, and whose "hats" they desired to sell to the best bidder. For this purpose the intended victims had been invited to a banquet, to be given in a garden in the environs of the city, where the Pope and Cesare Borgia, having been the first to arrive, awaited their guests. The weather was exceedingly hot, and Alexander was oppressed by thirst. He called for wine; and in the absence, as it should seem, of the servant who was entrusted with the important task of serving each guest with the beverage especially designed for him, received from the hands of one not in the secret, a cup of the poisoned wine prepared for the expected guests. Alexander drank largely; Cesare Borgia, and the Cardinal de Corneto, who had already arrived, and who was one of the intended victims, more sparingly. All three were brought back to Rome in an apparently dying state. But the Pope only died. Cesare Borgia and the Cardinal after long illness recovered.*

The world, I have said, was relieved by the death of Alexander VI. And the consentient tone of all the contemporary writers, including gossiping old Cambi, who promises to compose a record of his crimes "if I shall live till *after the death* of Cesare Borgia," justifies the assertion that even the sixteenth century world was sensible of a feeling of moral relief from the removal of such a monster from such a place. But it is equally true, that all the contemporary players in the intricate and guileful game of Italian politics, in which he had played so large a part, were also, from far narrower and lower motives, relieved by his

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxvii., Storia d'Italia, lib. vi. chap. i.; Cambi, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc. vol. xxi. p. 195. The quaint and naïve account given by this writer of Alexander is well worth reading. It is the transcript, exact even to the pronunciation, of the talk that might have been heard in the *loggie* and at the street corners of Florence, when the news of the Pope's death reached the city.

removal from the scene. Louis XII., who had mainly made for him that prosperity which so scandalized the material-minded and microscopic-eyed moralists, when they marked and speculated on it,—Louis, who had tarnished the honour of France, and his own name for ever by this shameful traffic with this false Pope, was especially glad to be rid of an accomplice, who was on the point of turning against him. The Venetians were much relieved by an event, which was calculated to break up the power of Cesare Borgia in Romagna, before it had had time to become consolidated. Florence and the other free cities of central Italy had, above all, cause to rejoice that the Pope's death had occurred when it did. A few more years, and, as there was every reason to fear, the rapidly rising power and ascendancy of that pestilent firebrand the Pope's son would have established on the confines of Tuscany a strong and compact dominion under despotic rule, which would hardly have been compatible with the continued existence of the independent cities; even if Borgia himself had not succeeded in making himself master of Pisa,—perhaps even of Florence,—of all central Italy;—nay, of aspiring to the empire of the entire peninsula. A.D. 1503.

For it must be remembered, in connection with what was said in a former chapter of this book, respecting the non-existence in mediæval Italy of those ideas of Italian unity, which have played so large a part in her modern history, that the absence of such ideas by no means excluded the unifying aspirations and projects of ambitious despotism. But there is no trace of any such tendency in the interest of freedom. The friends of freedom sought it in suspicious vigilance and frustration of such designs. Throughout the middle ages the preponderance of any Italian power was a constant source of alarm, and jealousy to all the others, because the more or less definite intention

A.D. 1503. of arriving at the empire of the entire peninsula was always suspected. But no one of the free states, with the exception of Venice, which could only be called so in a very modified sense of the term, ever had or was suspected to have any such ambition. During the whole of the mediæval period municipalism was the close ally of freedom. The project of unification by cumulative process of usurpation was a well known phenomenon enough. It was only patriotic aspirations in a similar direction that were unknown.

It was becoming very doubtful indeed at the time of Alexander's death, whether the French power would be able to maintain its own ground in Italy, much less to protect others. Alexander and his son, who were shrewd judges, had made up their minds that it could not. And in fact the great army which France was preparing to send to Naples, was before the end of 1503 as entirely defeated by "the Great Captain," Consalvi, as their predecessors in the same struggle had been. And what might then have been the fate of Florence, had Alexander lived, and Borgia still backed by the Papal power, in health, and unpoisoned by his father's blundering butler, there can be little doubt. But for Florence the death of the Pope was only half the benefit arising from that mistake at the suburban Papal banquet. The younger serpent, though not killed, was badly scotched;—so badly scotched, that at that critical moment, when it was of the most vital importance that he should be up and doing, gathering his forces together, multiplying his presence everywhere in his various recently-acquired states, and overawing disaffection by his authority, he was lying sick almost to death in Rome. He was so conscious of the urgent necessity of activity, that he rose from his sick-bed, as soon as it was possible for him to move, and strove to drag himself to the scene, where all the labour of

his life was being undone, and the reward of his infinite crimes wrenched from him. But the miserable wretch could get no further than Cività Castellana, a little town on the borders of the Roman Campagna; and was there obliged again to take to his bed. A.D. 1503.

Meantime, roused by the glad tidings of the Pope's death as by a trumpet call, the swarm of his enemies, the few of the dispossessed Signors who had escaped his dagger and his poison-cup, and the heirs and connections of the many who had been murdered by him, were seizing the golden moment. Everywhere the cities, which had been subjected by him, opened their gates to their old lords, or the representatives of them; and by the time Cesar Borgia had sufficiently recovered from the effects of the draught prepared by his father to put himself in the saddle, his dominions had fallen to pieces, and his power was irreparably broken.

He returned to Rome, was kept prisoner by the new Pope for awhile; was subsequently sent by Consalvi a prisoner to Spain, where shortly afterwards he was killed while fighting in some of the quarrels which were then rife on the southern slope of the Pyrenees.

But there was more good fortune in store for Florence; —a turn of the wheel, which caused probably still more vivid satisfaction in the city than the liberation of the Commonwealth from all further fears of the detested Borgias. The defeat of the French army in Naples, which was so fatal to the French power and hopes in that kingdom, was also fatal to Pietro de' Medici. Being in the French camp, when La Tremouille was compelled by the superior generalship of Consalvi to make a disastrous retreat from the banks of the Garigliano to Gaeta, Pietro was drowned on the 28th of December, 1503, by the sinking of a boat overloaded with artillery near the mouth of that river.

A.D. 1503. Great was the jubilee in Florence. And now, if only by the help of the Madonna, whose black effigy we brought down from her specially beloved hill church at Impruneta to help us in the siege—to no great purpose,—by the help of France, by the help of any body or of powers celestial, mundane, or infernal, Pisa could once more be ours, Florence would be herself again!

CHAPTER X.

Feeling in Florence about the recovery of Pisa—Plan of diverting the course of the Arno—Plan of tempting the Pisans to leave their city—Ercole Bentivoglio and other captains engaged—Different opinions in the city on this subject—Success under Bentivoglio—Attack on Pisa—The Italian soldiers refuse to march up to the breach—Soderini's answer to a message from Consalvi—Great disappointment—Peace made between France and Spain—It is agreed between these monarchs and Florence that Pisa shall return to Florence—Difficulty with Lucca—The Val di Nievole—Lucca attacked—Makes peace with Florence—Food introduced into Pisa by Florentine citizens—Measures for closing the blockade more strictly—Pisa at last yields—Florentine commissioners enter the city on the 8th June, 1509—Alliance between Pope and King—Election of Pius III. as Pope—Succeeded by Julius II. —His character—Grounds of alliance between him and Louis against the Venetians—Great defeat of the latter—Prinzivalle della Stufa's conspiracy in favour of the Medici—Sudden change of policy on the part of the Pope—Leagues with Venice and the Spaniards against France—Florence at a loss how to act—The Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici—French successes near Bologna—Project of a schismatic Council—opened at Pisa—Florence placed under interdict by the Pope —Julius determined on restoring the Medici—The interdict removed—Further French successes—Great battle of Ravenna—Death of Gaston de Foix—Julius will not hear of peace—The French driven from Italy —Demands made on Florence—Her answer—Invasion of Tuscany by the Spanish viceroy and the Medici—Sack of Prato—Soderini leaves Florence—The Medici enter it.

If only we could get Pisa! What means can we try next? where can we look for help to get possession of Pisa? The government of the city is not altogether satisfactory. Our new Gonfaloniere for life does not do all that we expected of him. As for the administration of criminal justice, for one thing, he pays no attention to it whatever; and it is worse if anything than before;—which

A.D. 1503. is hardly possible! Still, these are secondary matters. Favouritism on the judge's bench and failure of justice more frequent than the execution of it is bad. But we can bear all this awhile, and see about it afterwards. The main thing, the pressing thing, the one thing without which no Florentine can eat his bread in contentment of spirit, or sleep tranquilly at night, is the recovery of Pisa.

But what is to be done? We burn their harvests; and the obstinate hounds get supplies sent in by the Arno. Our rivals, Genoa and Lucca, are at the bottom of it, we know! They make an infamous traffic of supplying our rebels, breaking our blockade, and thus baffling our legitimate hopes. We know that they are half starved;—that the suffering and difficulty of living in the city is extreme. But the malignant obstinacy of the hateful race is so great, that they will suffer anything rather than submit to our yoke.

This was the constant burthen of the talk, that made so large a part of the semi-public life, which the climate and out-of-door habits of the people, no less than the special characteristics of the Florentine mind, and the nature of the political constitution, rendered so marked a feature of the old Florentine society. Under the numerous open "*Loggie*" of the city, where the owners of the palaces to which they were attached used to meet their friends and connections in a half-public, half-private manner, amid the discussions of family interest, or of philosophy, the arrangement of matrimonial alliances, or the watching of a game at chess, still grumbling and eager talk about the hopes or fears of the day as to the destiny of Pisa was sure to occupy some group of the talkers. At the street corners the "*popolo minuto*" were discussing the same subject; and the artisans in the workshops, though excluded from the Council and from all participa-

tion in the government of the city, were not less busy in debate on the same topic. A.D. 1504.

And now, early in 1504, a new idea upon the subject was being eagerly canvassed throughout the city. What if we could turn the course of the Arno? leave Pisa and its accursed citizens high and dry, and ruined for ever! No more food coming in by sea, then! No more running of our blockade! Projectors learned in hydraulics have been with Gonfaloniere Soderini, and fully persuaded him of the feasibility of the plan. Many prudent citizens doubt it much. But Soderini is persuaded that the thing may be done, and will have it tried. So diggers and dyke contractors are set to work; and many thousand ducats are spent. But either the skill of the engineers, or the number of the ducats spent, or the perseverance of the Florentines, was not sufficient. For Arno, with an obstinacy as provoking as that of the Pisans, persisted in following its accustomed course, and the scheme was abandoned.*

Then said Gonfaloniere Soderini,—"It is not conceivable that these dogs of Pisans are animated by any real feelings of patriotism. Let us proclaim that every Pisan who will leave the city shall be pardoned his rebellion, and have his property restored to him. We shall see that, a few at a time, every man of them will come out; and Pisa will be left empty! So proclamation to the above effect was made. And sure enough sundry of the inhabitants of Pisa presented themselves to take advantage of it. Aha! this scheme at least works well! Our Gonfaloniere was right; and we shall get Pisa at last! But it very soon began to be observed, that, with a singular uniformity of circumstance, all those who thus left the city, and were admitted by the Florentines to the

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxviii.; Mecatti, ad ann. 1504.

A.D. 1504. benefits of the proclamation, were either very old, or very infirm, or for some reason or other were members of the besieged community altogether useless for the purposes of defence or resistance. The Pisans were, in fact, only getting rid of their useless mouths, which was a most important advantage for a city under such circumstances. Not a man left the city, who could be of any use in it; and the Florentines perceived that they had made fools of themselves.

Much about the same time, too, a tempest dispersed and in part destroyed the fleet, which had been stationed off the mouth of the Arno, for the prevention of the introduction of food into Pisa; and the consequence was, that a large supply of grain, sent by the Genoese, the Lucchese, and the Sienese, reached the besieged city in safety.

And Pisa was as far from being subdued as ever.

But Florence also was as far as ever from having the least idea of abandoning the attempt that had cost her so many years of struggle, and so many mortifying failures. She hired fresh captains,—all the "available talent" of the day,—Messer Hercules Bentivoglio of Bologna, Messer Gian Paolo Baglioni of Perugia, some noble gentlemen of the House of Colonna, and others of the Savelli. Very costly they were, these sovereign hireling soldiers, and grievous were the burthens which the groaning citizens had to endure to provide the funds needed for satisfying their demands. If only they could be trusted—these noble fighting men—not to sell their employers! If only they would but honestly earn the splendid wages that were paid them! But the experience of the Commonwealth had been unfortunate in this respect. They had been the victims of so many crosses. Yet what could they do? For the days when the stout leathern-jerkined burghers of Florence managed the ledger with one hand, and the sword with the other, were far, far off in the dim past,—gone

never to return! There was nothing else for it but to pay well, and hire the "best available talent." A.D. 1504.

But under the present circumstances of the Commonwealth, there was this additional difficulty in the matter. These noble captains, the tyrant sovereigns of neighbouring cities, had naturally more sympathy with the exiled pretenders, the Medici, than with the free citizens. They would any of them have much preferred seeing at Florence a government of their own sort, to one which was essentially revolutionary, and was likely to be always a dangerous example, if not an active provoker of sedition in their own cities.

Thus it turned out that Gian Paolo Baglioni, of Perugia, deserted us altogether, and openly declared himself the supporter of the Medici! For it is not to be imagined that the death of Pietro—providential blessing as it was—put an end to the dangers from that source. There were other heads to the hydra. There was Giuliano, now called the Duc de Nemours, and, worse still, there was the Cardinal Giovanni, an active, able, dangerous man, with the Papal tiara, as we know, under his Cardinal's purple.

The hiring, too, of these captains was by no means a simple matter, but was influenced by a host of considerations, which were but too well calculated to breed jealousies and suspicions at home.

"These Colonnas! What need have we to hire the Colonnas? Why not rather, if Messer Ercole is not sufficient, take the Marchese di Mantova, the noble Gonzaga? He is to be had;—nay, was here in the city looking out for a job but the other day!"

"Ay! you must ask Messer Gonfaloniere that. Did you never hear of his worship's brother the Cardinal?" sneers the other talker in a street-corner dialogue.

"Why, what has the Cardinal Soderini to do in the matter?"

A.D. 1505. "Bah! you see nothing! Don't you understand that his Eminence of Volterra wants to hold his own against his brother Cardinal de' Medici. Don't you know that Medici and Orsini must needs draw together!—Foul fall the day when first a citizen of Florence intermarried with that hateful brood!—And will not Colonna and Orsini be foes to the death, and to the end of time? So that is why we must pay for a Colonna captain, mio povero Cecco!".

So went the talk in Florence.

The Florentine troops meanwhile, in consequence of this tergiversation of Baglioni, had suffered a defeat in the immediate neighbourhood of Pisa. So at last Messer Ercole Bentivoglio was despatched to the seat of war, and on the 18th of August, 1505, routed the enemy, backed as they were by Baglioni, and by Spanish assistance from Naples,* with great loss.†

This good news raised the courage and the hopes of the Florentines to a high pitch. The Gonfaloniere Soderini was especially elated at it; and would hear of nothing but an immediate assault on Pisa;—a course in which he was sure to carry the multitude of the citizens with him. But the more experienced and prudent men in the city were much opposed to it. Though Messer Ercole Bentivoglio had a high reputation as a strategist, they doubted much that he had the dash and vigour in him that were needed for the success of such an enterprise. They feared also the quality of the troops under his command. They were all Italians; and already the experience of what Swiss and Spanish, and French troops did and might be expected to do had taught the Italians a fatal lesson of distrust and hopelessness in any efforts or prowess of their own people.

* For as Louis was all this time understood to be the ally of Florence, Spain, the enemy of France in Naples, of course backed Pisa in her struggle against Florence.

† Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxviii.

Further, these same prudent citizens remembered the fate of the army of Pisa under Paolo Vitelli. It was already the latter end of August. September is the worst month in all the year for the malaria. And they dreaded, not unreasonably, to expose another army to the effects of camping in autumn in the marshes around Pisa. A.D. 1505.

Soderini, however, would listen to no misgivings. To a message from Consalvi, "the Great Captain," asserting that it had been an understanding between him and the Cardinal Soderini, speaking on behalf of the city, that Pisa should not be assaulted that year, and threatening that in eight days he would throw a force of his own troops into that city, the Gonfaloniere replied with a smile, that in less than eight days Pisa would be theirs. Soderini had his way, and Messer Ercole was despatched to lead the assault. The black Virgin was once more brought into Florence from her home at Impruneta; and all Florence, with the exception of the few cautious and prudent gainsayers, was in high hope of the result.

That result was very quickly known. The artillery most successfully made a breach in the walls of many yards in extent. The breach was practicable enough; and nothing remained but to march to the assault. But this the Italian infantry flatly refused to do. At the same time, the body of Spanish troops, sent in accordance with the threat of Consalvi, approached; and Messer Ercole Bentivoglio judged it necessary to withdraw his army, and abandon the attempt.

And thus once again Florence was disappointed, and the prey she so ardently desired to seize had escaped from her hand. All the expense she had undergone was thrown away. All her tolerance of the bad internal government of the Gonfaloniere, in the hope that he would contrive the means of recovering Pisa, had been in vain. The black Virgin herself, who had now twice been brought out

A.D. 1507. against Pisa, seemed powerless to quell those detested and malignant rebels.

Still Florence was as far as ever from having the least intention of giving up her enterprise. But the great disappointment arising from this disgraceful failure sufficed to prevent the Commonwealth from making any fresh attempt for some little time to come. In the next year no troops were sent against Pisa, nor were the crops of the Pisan territory ravaged. On the contrary the Pisans, taking heart at the signal failure of their enemy, sallied forth from their walls and did much mischief in the Val di Nievole, without provoking any movement on the part of the Florentines beyond what was necessary for the defence of their territory against invasion.*

Meanwhile circumstances had led to the making of peace between France and Spain, the terms of which were settled by the treaty of Blois, signed in the October of 1505. And one of the results of this was, that it became possible to treat with both those sovereigns conjointly respecting the restoration of Pisa to the Florentine Commonwealth. Hitherto no such arrangement had been possible, because it had been sufficient for one of these rival sovereigns to show favour to Florence to secure to Pisa the assistance of the other. The year 1507 was mainly consumed in negotiations to this end. Messengers came to Florence from both the monarchs, asking whether it was the intention of the Florentines to pursue their attacks against Pisa that year. The French king had asked the Republic to send him a supply of troops for a purpose of his own, which the city had refused to do, alleging that they needed all their force for the prosecution of the war against Pisa. And it was thought that Louis would have sent a very angry message. The Spaniard, too, had in previous years abso-

* Mecatti, op. cit. ad ann.

lutely forbidden the Florentines to molest Pisa, on pain of finding him there as their enemy. But now his tone was altered, and that of the French sovereign, instead of being such as had been anticipated, was "quite sweet."* In short, it was very plain to the shrewd Florentine perception that they had only to offer an acceptable "consideration" to either monarch to be allowed to work their will against their enemy. In fact it had been agreed between the now reconciled kings that Pisa should be restored to Florence. But of course "the Most Christian," and his brother "the Most Catholic," were not to be expected to miss so favourable and legitimate an opportunity of demanding a little "gratification" in return for their favours. Florence had never in all the course of her history had any dealings of any sort with prince, pope, or potentate without being called on to pay largely for the honour. She had in the great majority of cases shovelled out her gold florins and ducats without getting any consideration in return save the honour of being paymaster to such noble personages,—an honour which was, it must be admitted, more highly appreciated in the days when the florins and the ducats were flowing into Florence in greater abundance than was the case now. Still, what were a hundred thousand ducats to the "Most Christian" king of France, and fifty thousand to the "Most Catholic" king of Spain for the recovery of Pisa? There was not a heavily-taxed Florentine who would have hesitated an instant to purchase what was so much longed for at such a price. A.D. 1507.

In fine, it was agreed on all sides,—not without some doubt and fears in the councils of Florence lest the "Most Catholic" should be offended at getting only half the "gratification" destined for his "Most Christian" brother,—that in consideration of the payment of those sums Pisa

* Guicciardini, loc. cit.

A.D 1507. should be condemned to return to the yoke of Florence. The bargain was that the Florentines should accomplish the subjection of the rebel city within a year from the date of the agreement. But Louis promised, that if the Commonwealth should find itself unable to perform this part of the stipulation, he would himself lend a helping hand.

Nevertheless there were still doubts and much anxiety on the subject in Florence. It was felt that, "considering the nature of the French people, wholly faithless and apt to refuse to be bound by their words as they are," * the utmost caution was necessary, lest the result should be that France "would not restore Pisa to us, and would nevertheless, by shuffling and by force, extort from us this sum of money." † It was urged, however, that it was but too clear that without the consent of these two kings there was small chance of seeing Pisa once again subjected to the dominion of the Commonwealth;—that though the sum of money was large, it would be abundantly well spent if the object were attained;—and that if it were not attained, and if it were the will of the two kings to plunder Florence of such a sum contrary to all right and justice, they would not fail to find some means of doing so, even if the proposed arrangement were not made. ‡

It was finally determined, mainly by the influence of Soderini the Gonfaloniere, who seems to have been inclined to carry matters with rather a high hand, and sometimes not quite constitutionally (though there is no evidence of his having had any other end in view than what he deemed the interest of the Commonwealth), that the proposed arrangement should be finally concluded. But there were still difficulties in the way. Lucca, which, bound by ties of common Guelphism, had in old days been, in times of

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, op. ined. vol. iii. p. 333. † *Ibid.*
‡ Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxx.

trouble as well as in times of prosperity, the firm friend and ally of Florence, had shown herself animated by a very different feeling ever since Florence had possessed herself of the rich and beautiful Val di Nievole,—the valley which stretches from Lucca towards Pistoia, and is closed about five miles before it reaches the latter city by a high fort-crowned ridge, called very appropriately Serravalle. The little city of Pescia, with its industrious silk-producing population and garden-like territory, is situated in the midst of this lovely vale, the garden of Tuscany; and it formed geographically as well as politically the best part of the territory of the little republic of Lucca. But it was now part of the wide-spread dominion of the great encroaching Commonwealth; and Lucca could not forget or forgive the injury. During the whole of the long struggle between Pisa and Florence, therefore, Lucca had never ceased more or less openly, or more or less clandestinely, to supply Pisa with food, and thus frustrate the efforts of Florence. A.D. 1507.

It was determined, therefore, that Lucca should be attacked by an assault on Via Reggio; and the plan was carried out so vigorously and so much mischief was done, that Lucca at once saw the necessity of coming to terms with her powerful neighbour. She was minded, however, to get something in return for the engagement to send no more food into Pisa, which Florence was so anxious to obtain from her; so demanded the little town of Pietra Santa, the geographical position of which assigned the dominion of it to Lucca rather than to Florence, and the ancient and now ruinous fort of Mutrone, as the price of her adherence to the views of the Republic. Long debate took place on the answer to be made to these demands; but they were eventually acceded to, and a treaty with Lucca concluded.*

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxxi.

A.D. 1508. Nevertheless it soon became evident that food was not wholly excluded from Pisa even yet. The unhappy Pisans were almost starved, but it was clear that they received food somehow, for they were not quite starved; and until they were so, it seemed hopeless to expect their submission.

There were also but too evidently other causes in operation, which not only had the effect of enabling the Pisans to hold out, but which gave rise to a variety of jealousies, angry passions, and dangerous recriminations at home. Of course the price of grain in Pisa was enormous. Various Florentine citizens were extensive landowners in the rich corn-producing district in the lower Valdarno around that city; and there was reason to suspect—and somewhat more than suspect—that the lust of private gain had destroyed the sentiment of patriotism in sundry of these men so completely and shamefully, that the corn grown on their land found its way more or less indirectly into the city of Pisa. Some of the Albizzi were suspected of being engaged in this highly lucrative, but still more highly treasonable traffic; and when it was whispered that a secret partnership existed between these Albizzi and Messer Tommaso, the nephew of Gonfaloniere * Soderini, the indignation and anger which arose in Florence may easily be imagined, as well as the dangerous excitement of party feeling in a community in which the active participation of every prominent citizen in the government, caused the affairs of private life and the public interests of the Commonwealth continually to intermingle and as it were overlap each other.

It became necessary therefore to close the blockade around Pisa more strictly. With this view the forces around that city were divided into three bodies, and cer-

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxxiii.

tain works were constructed on the river approaches below Pisa, which it was hoped would effectually prevent the introduction of food into the place, except, says Guicciardini,* in such very small quantities as would not suffice to keep the inhabitants alive for many days;—a reservation which curiously illustrates the imperfection of the means provided for a purpose, so attainable in perfection according to the ideas of our days. A.D. 1509.

The means thus so elaborately prepared for starving unhappy Pisa into submission seem, however, at last to have been effectual. In truth, to whatever quarter of the political sky the ruined and starving citizens cast their despairing eyes, the prospect was equally hopeless. The accord between France and Spain had been fatal to their hopes. It was now clear that it did not make part of the policy of these potentates to take the bribes of Florence for nothing on this occasion; but that it was the real intention of both of them that Pisa should return to the cruel yoke of her tyrants. A second convention between the two monarchs, in the early part of this year, 1509, had removed all doubt on this subject. Lucca, which had so long found the means of enabling them to hold out, was now constrained by the power of the enemy to leave them to their fate. Siena was in a similar impossibility of lending them any further aid. Then, as usual in such cases, differences within the walls began to add to their difficulties. For fifteen years, since the coming of Charles VIII. had restored them to independence, they had maintained the unequal struggle with a courage and constancy which are the measure of the sufferings they had endured under the Florentine despotism. For fifteen years the harvests of their "*contadini*" and land-owners had been ruthlessly destroyed almost every year; and they had been living in

* Storia Fiorentina, p. 388.

A.D. 1509. the greatest straits and difficulties. But they had been sustained by hope, drawn not unreasonably from the general position of affairs in Italy. And that hope had now vanished.

At last eight ambassadors were sent by the Pisans to Florence to treat for the surrender of the city. They arrived there on the 25th of May, 1509, and were lodged at St. Piero Scheraggio, with strict precautions for the prevention of any communication between them and the Florentine citizens.* Long discussions ensued; for the Pisans struggled hard for terms as little oppressive as might be. And Florence was on the whole not inclined to be as hard with them as might be expected from the hatred of which so many expressions are to be found in the contemporary writers. Virtue is easy to happy hearts. And the Florentines were very happy to find themselves at last on the point of attaining the object they had so long and ardently sighed for. At last it was finally agreed that the city should be delivered into the hands of the Florentine Commissioners; and that full pardon and amnesty should be accorded to Pisa for her rebellion, and all that had been done in support of it. Nor was any restitution of personal property to be demanded in any case arising out of the expulsion of the Florentines fifteen years ago.

On the 8th of June, 1509, the Florentine Commissioners made their triumphal entrance into Pisa, to the infinite joy, says the historian,† not only of the whole city of Florence, but also of the populace of Pisa, whose miserably emaciated appearance showed how welcome any change must have become to them, which put an end to the terrible suffering they had been enduring.

And thus finally ended the last struggle for independence of those proud Pisans, who had some three centuries

* Ammirato, lib. xxviii. † *Ibid.*

earlier described the men of infant Florence as "their Arabs of the interior." A.D. 1509.

In the meantime, while Florence had been mainly occupied with conducting to a successful termination the various negotiations and efforts which had at last enabled her to compel the submission of Pisa, the same changes on the political chess-board of Italy which had so powerfully contributed to that effect, by making the kings of Spain and France of one mind on that subject, were also preparing the way for another revolution in the affairs of the Commonwealth of a nature far more seriously disastrous to her best interests, if her citizens could only have rightly understood them, than the dominion of Pisa could ever be serviceable to them. For the wheel of fortune, set in motion by the large cupidities and small ambitions of princes, had once again brought about that ever disastrous phase in the affairs of mankind, a community of interest and alliance between spiritual and temporal despots.

No fouler pages exist in history than those which record, —no more essentially ungodly conduct of the destinies of mankind has been seen in the world, than that which has arisen from—the alliances of Popes with Kings. From the first their quarrels were the harvest-times of human progress, the seed-times of freedom. From her earliest infancy all that Florence had done for the advancement of civilization—and it had been much—had been accomplished by favour of the opportunities made for her by the quarrels of these two great despotisms. The final ruin of her fortunes, to which our story is now nearly approaching, was brought about by the Godless union of them. This union was now already being formed, and was already beginning to produce its normal results. And though certain divergences of interest produced such temporary breaches in the loathsome alliance as allowed the Com-

A.D. 1509. monwealth the opportunity for a last and gallant, though fruitless, struggle, yet the beginning of the end may be dated from the period we have already reached.

And there is a certain appositeness, and justice of the poetical kind,—of another kind too, I think, if we look closely enough,—in that arrangement of events, which made the very same causes that enabled Florence to crush the independence of a sister community, those which finally destroyed her own.

Alexander VI. died, as has been seen, in August, 1492. There was a violent battle of strong opposing powers in the conclave which succeeded his death. Each jarring interest in the world of European politics was represented in that body of purple priests, shut up under pretence of choosing the common father of Christianity, uninfluenced by any inspiration save that of God's Holy Spirit. But the result was what it has often been in similar cases. An inoffensive old man, with no claim to the corrupt support of any of the parties which divided the conclave between them, was the only one of their body on whom a sufficient number of the electors could agree. And Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini, the Archbishop of Siena, was chosen Pope under the title of Pius III. The one claim to the support of the Cardinals which had sufficed to place his name in the list of the successors of St. Peter, was his age and weak state of health. And indeed the new election, at no distant day, which the choice of him was intended to secure, came upon the College more quickly than they could have anticipated, and before the different parties interested had had time to prepare themselves for another contest. For Pius III. reigned only twenty-seven days. His successor was Giuliano della Rovere, that same active, strong, and energetic Cardinal of San Pietro ad Vincula whom we have seen, as the implacable enemy of Alexander VI., eagerly urging the French

king to undertake that expedition into Italy which resulted so differently from his expectations. A.D. 1509.

The character of Pope Julius II.—for that was the title selected by the new Pontiff—is in its general outline sufficiently well known. A saintly man in comparison with Alexander Borgia, he was positively no worse than the other soldier rulers around him, which for a fifteenth-century Pope is saying much. Judged by a modern standard, he must be admitted about as unfit a man for the supreme Pontificate of Christendom as could well be chosen. Giuliano della Rovere was intended by nature for a soldier. He was a brave, active, and able one, and not without some of the virtues which belong to such a character. But the purple princes of the Church thought that he was the man needed for the Papacy; and if the fifteenth-century Church deemed the dominion of those Romagna cities only as important to the interests of Christianity as the nineteenth-century Papacy deems them, perhaps the princes of the Church were not wrong. For those territories, as well as the cities of Umbria, had all at that time to be won for St. Peter by the force of arms. And for the accomplishment of this, it cannot be denied that Pope Julius II. was the right man in the right place.

But it was unfortunate for Florence that the interest of the Church in this matter coincided with the interests of the French king. Both the Pope and the King found themselves in a position involving enmity with Venice. Louis XII. had reason to think that the haughty Senate sitting among the hundred isles was a dangerous neighbour to his duchy of Milan; and Pope Julius was well aware that Venice would oppose the addition to the States of the Church of cities on which she was casting a covetous eye herself. The power of the Lion of St. Mark had become so great and far-reaching, that the Spanish King of Naples also was uneasy at it, when thinking of his long

A.D. 1509. line of Adriatic seaboard, and the many cities with which it is studded. Maximilian, King of the Romans, also, who had recently made a disastrous peace with Venice, was willing enough to break it in company with allies whose assistance made a more favourable adjustment of his differences with the Queen of the Adriatic probable. And the result of these various motives was the famous League of Cambrai, signed by the Kings of France and of Spain, and by the King of the Romans in December, 1508. The name of the Pope was not appended to it; but a place was specially reserved for him in the instrument; and it was known that the League was formed with his privity and approval, and, as there was good reason for thinking, not without a promise on his part of assistance towards the object proposed both in men and money.*

The first result of this League was a terrible and famous defeat of the Venetians at Ghiaradadda on the 14th of May, 1509, and the loss by them of Bergamo, Brescia, Cremona, Verona, Vicenza, and Padua.

The Florentines were meanwhile engaged in taking possession of Pisa, as has been related; and were engaged tranquilly during the remainder of that year and the year following, in caring for the government of their recovered dependency, and in passing sundry laws,—for the limitation to a thousand florins of the dowries given with marriageable girls,—for the calling in of clipped coin,—for the reformation of the administration of the mint, and other such administrative matters.

The tranquillity of these months was interrupted only by a foolish conspiracy in favour of the Medici, which served at least to keep alive in the minds of the citizens the sense of the danger from this source that was always more or less hanging over them; † and a little later by

* Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina, chap. xxxiii.

† A vain and foolish youth, one Prinzivalle della Stufa, was flattered and

certain changes in the political sky which gave indications that the interval of tranquillity would not be a long one. A.D. 1510.

It would seem that the shrewdly political warrior-Pope, Julius II., began to think that he had used the alliance of France for the repression of the Venetian power sufficiently. There is reason to believe that he had from the beginning of his Papacy conceived the idea of driving out of Italy the French, whose invasion of the peninsula he had at an earlier period done so much to promote.* And now, having used the French arms and alliance for the repression of the too great Venetian power, it was time to shift his sails and go on the other tack. Separating himself from his allies therefore, Julius made peace with Venice, and gave her his Apostolic blessing on the 20th of February, 1510.

The result, as far as Florence was concerned, of this entirely new grouping of the powers and forces throughout the peninsula, was to render it exceedingly difficult for her to steer her course between the demands of the Pope and those of the King of France. Gonfaloniere Soderini, and those in Florence who principally supported him, were strongly French in their sympathies. They conceived that the best safety for the Commonwealth was to be found in frankly and firmly adhering to the French alliance. Their opponents were equally convinced, that it was more for the interest of the Republic not to draw down on it the enmity of the warlike Pontiff and the Venetians. To this party belonged all the more or less secret adherents of the Medici; for the Cardinal and the Pope held together;

cajoled by the Cardinal de' Medici into risking his life in this ill-considered attempt. Prinzivalle attempted to gain over Filippo Strozzi, who denounced the whole matter to the government. A detailed account of this episode may be found in the "Life of Filippo Strozzi" by the present writer. See chap. iii. of that work.

* Ammirato, chap. xxviii.

A.D. 1510. and the latter found a powerful instrument in the Cardinal de' Medici for the wreaking of his enmity on Soderini. For the Cardinal had, since the death of his brother Pietro, adopted in a very marked manner a totally different line of conduct from that pursued by his brother, and one which rendered the danger to Florentine freedom from the existence of the Medicean claims, though different in kind, by no means less in amount.

The Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, soon to become Pope as Leo X., was indeed a very different sort of man from his elder brother Pietro. The latter was, as the Florentines were wont constantly to say in the bitterness of their hatred, an Orsini of the Orsini, the child of his mother, inheriting all the feudal and anti-civic haughtiness and brutal manners of that proud race. His brother Giovanni was his father's child, essentially a Medici, cultured, loving learning, affable, pleasant-mannered, jovial, and politic. Instead of disgusting and alienating even the hereditary friends of his house, as Pietro did by his intolerable insolence and brutality of manner, the Cardinal disarmed the enmity of most of the Florentines whom he could find the opportunity of getting within reach of his pleasant tongue and winning manners. The result was a very marked diminution of the general feeling of hatred for the Medicean name which had prevailed in Florence during the lifetime of Pietro, and the profession of Medicean sympathies by very many who either did not feel them, or did not dare to avow them as long as he had lived.

The consequence of the uncertainty produced in Florence by the opposite dangers of offending the Pontiff and quarrelling with King Louis, and by the different opinions prevailing in the city as to the wisest course to be pursued, was that the Florentine policy, vacillating, trimming, and temporizing, offended both parties. At first the policy

recommended by the Gonfaloniere seemed to be justified by the progress of events. Early in the year 1511, the French discomfiting the Papal and Venetian troops in the Bolognese territory, compelled the Pontiff (notwithstanding his personal prowess in storming a breach at the little town of Mirandola in his own sacred person*) to fly from Bologna, which they restored to the Bentivoglio family. A.D. 1511.

But Louis XII. felt almost more ill at ease as conqueror of the Pope, than if he had been conquered by him. The reverence felt by him and by all those around him for the Papal See was very much greater than any sentiment of the kind to be found in Italy; and the French king was more inclined to apologise for his victory than to follow it up. But no submission, no conciliatory words could modify the angry hostility of Julius. Nothing less than the expulsion of the French from the soil of Italy would content him. It became necessary therefore to reply to such uncompromising hostility by arms of a kind more especially adapted to the enemy to be dealt with. And to this end all the French and Spanish Cardinals in the Sacred College united to call a Council against the Pope, which, though it might not succeed in dethroning him, would at least create such a schism in the Catholic world as would effectually cripple his power, even if the mere mention of that word of fear to Papal ears, "A Council of the Church," did not induce him at once to adopt a more conciliatory line of conduct.

But where was this Council to be held? A body of schismatic Cardinals, seeking to set all Christendom at loggerheads, by dividing the Church, was circumstanced

* Ammirato, lib. xxviii.; Mecatti, ad ann.; Nardi, Istorie di Firenze, vol. i. ed. cit. p. 435. The latter represents this feat of the Pontiff as merely a scaling of the wall, by ladders, after the town had surrendered, because he was too impatient to wait till the gates could be opened.

A.D. 1511. somewhat similarly to a body of the "champions of the ring," seeking a locality for the illegal contest on which they are bent. No Signor, Prince, Potentate, or Community, that could help itself, would permit the dangerous battle to be fought on their territory. In this difficulty the purple schismatics fixed their eyes on Pisa. And Florence was sorely perplexed what to do in so thorny and difficult a matter. Of course she was at daggers drawn with France if she refused to permit the "event" to come off on her ground; and even more evidently she incurred the furious anger of the Pontiff, if she did allow it. Of course this difficulty, and the importance it was of to Florence to keep on fair terms with France, and the knowledge that Soderini might be depended on to use all his influence in favour of the French Cardinals and their scheme, were reasons that decided the choice of the locality fixed on for the purpose. And in fact, despite a very strong opposition in the city, the Gonfaloniere was strong enough to cause the necessary permission to be accorded. "It was a most pernicious decision, and one not to be remembered without tears," says Lorenzo Strozzi * in his biography of his brother Filippo. Lorenzo was a "Piagnone;" and it is curious to learn from this expression of his opinion, that the change of circumstances in Italy since the death of Savonarola had already caused the sympathies of the "Piagnone" party to veer round to a point of the political compass the very opposite to that towards which they pointed during the lifetime of the prophet.

The schismatic Council was announced then to be opened at Pisa on the 1st of September, 1511. And it was opened accordingly; but under circumstances which soon indi-

* See the Vita di Filippo Strozzi, printed as a preface to Lemonnier's edition of Niccolini's tragedy, "Filippo Strozzi." Firenze: Lemonnier.

cated that the party attempting this step had ventured on it without sufficiently ascertaining their own strength and powers of carrying it out. Although, by the influence of Gonfaloniere Soderini, the permission of the government had been given, the Pisans threw every difficulty they could in the way of the schismatic Cardinals. The Pisan clergy wholly refused to assist in or be present at any of the ceremonials of the opening. They shut the doors of the cathedral against the Cardinals. The magistrates of the city absolutely refused to permit three hundred French lances, which had been sent to ensure the personal security of the Cardinals, to enter the gates. In the midst of these difficulties three sittings were held. But before any of the real business of the Council had been entered on, a street quarrel, which chanced to arise between some of the followers of the French Cardinals and the townsfolk, and which was allowed, very probably intended, to grow into such a disturbance that the executive authorities of the city declared themselves unable to quell the riot, so alarmed their Eminences that, declaring the Council transferred to Milan, they broke up, and departed in much haste and confusion, "to the infinite satisfaction of the Florentines and of the Pisans, as well as of the Cardinals themselves."* A.D. 1511.

But this disastrous breaking up and departure of the hostile Council was by no means sufficient to appease the wrath of Pope Julius. He summoned the schismatic Cardinals to appear before him in Rome; and on their failing to do so within a stated time, deprived them of their purple. He "began furiously to threaten excommunication and interdicts, not against Pisa only, but against Florence also, together with all its territory;—to publish in all lands that the Florentines were schismatics and heretics;—

* Mecatti, ad ann.; Ammirato, lib. xxviii.; Nardi, lib. v.

A.D. 1511. and to give up to plunder all the property of Florentines to be found in Rome or in any other part of the ecclesiastical dominions. And he proceeded to act accordingly."* The Gonfaloniere, according to the old Florentine method of dealing with such ecclesiastical censures, simply ordered the Tuscan clergy to proceed with their functions as usual. And doubtless the Florentines would have cared as little for the interdict of Pope Julius as they cared for many another in the bygone days of his predecessors, had there not been a strong party who were eager to make political capital out of it in their hostility to the Gonfaloniere. There was a good deal of outcry therefore about the absolute necessity of liberating consciences from the intolerable burthen thus laid on them, by falling in with the views of the Pontiff, and thus obtaining the removal of the interdict.

Julius, however, knew of a method of punishing Florence by a lash laid on a much tenderer place in the public mind than that of its religious fears. He declared himself a warm partisan and supporter of the Medicean claims to restoration; and followed up the declaration by sending the Cardinal de' Medici as Papal Legate to Bologna, for the avowed purpose of harassing Florence with the dangers and suspicions arising out of his presence in such near neighbourhood to the city. Soderini replied to this attack by imposing a heavy tax on all ecclesiastical property within the Florentine dominions. But the Council, without the concurrence of which the tax could not be levied, fearing the effects of further irritating the Pontiff, cancelled the decree. And the Pope on his side, anxious to avoid driving Florence to throw herself altogether into the arms of France, and at the same time glad of an opportunity of making it felt that his quarrel was with the Gonfaloniere, and not with

* Nardi, Istorie Firenze, ed. cit. vol. i. p. 450.

the citizens, in return for the withdrawal of the tax on ecclesiastical property, removed the interdict. A.D. 1512.

In fact, both the armed parties in Italy were striving to obtain the adherence of Florence, which alone of all the states of the peninsula had hitherto remained neutral. On the one side was France, defending her Duchy of Milan,—for Pope Julius had brought it to that, that France now stood alone;—and on the other side, the Pontiff and his "Holy League," including the Emperor, and nominally the King of England, as well as, to more practical purpose, the King of Naples and Venice. With Florence the main object was, to be on the winning side; and the whole scope of her policy during the year 1511, and the first half of 1512, was to avoid, as far as might be, giving unforgivable offence to either party, and to wait, if possible, to see what was likely to be the result of the coming struggle before pronouncing herself. To these motives was added, however, a certain amount of bias to one side, by the enmity of a great number of the leading men in the city to Soderini, who was a strong and thorough-going partisan of France.

The year 1512 opened with a series of notable successes on the part of the French. On the 5th February, Gaston de Foix, general for the King of France, took Bologna; on the 15th routed Giovan Paolo Baglione, in command of the Venetian forces; and on the 19th recovered Brescia. On Easter Monday further news of the same complexion reached Florence, brought to the Gonfaloniere as he was in company with all the Signory attending mass in the cathedral, by one who had ridden from Ravenna to Florence in fourteen hours. A great battle had taken place near the former city between the French and the army of the League, in which the latter had been terribly beaten. The rout was most complete, and the slaughter of the conquered army great. But it was judged on all

A.D. 1512. hands that the victory had been to the full as costly to the French as the defeat had been to their enemies. For Gaston de Foix had fallen.*

Still the impression made throughout Italy by these reiterated successes of the French arms was very great. It began to be said that all attempt to resist the French valour was vain. And when Louis XII., after this great victory, was moderate enough to meet with perfect readiness the first suggestions made by certain Cardinals of the Apostolical Court with a view to peace between the combatants, accepting immediately the proposal that Florence should be named as mediator between them, and sending at once to that city an ambassador charged with his instructions for the purpose, the general feeling throughout Italy was very strongly in favour of a general adjustment and reconciliation.

But there was one man in Italy who would hear of no such reconciliation;—who would have no crying of peace where there was no peace;—whom nothing would satisfy short of the complete expulsion of the French from Italian soil. And this man was the supreme Pontiff. The voice of Julius, the warrior-Pope, was still for war. Giulio de' Medici,† who had been sent to the scene of action by his cousin the Cardinal Giovanni, Legate at Bologna, assured the Pontiff that in fact the losses of the French in the battle of Ravenna had been fully as great as those of the League, and that important assistance was at hand from a large body of Swiss, who were even then on their march down the slopes of the Alps. In fact, the loss of the French had been far greater and more irremediable than

* Guicciardini, Storia d'Italia, lib. x.; Ammirato, lib. xxviii.; Mecatti, ad ann.; Nardi, lib. v.

† The illegitimate son of Giuliano, younger brother of Lorenzo the Magnificent, born in 1478, and three years younger therefore than his cousin Giovanni the Cardinal. The latter became Pope Leo X. in 1513, and the former Pope Clement VII. in 1523.

the more visible and vulgarly appreciable losses of their enemies. For they lost the soul of victory. Gaston de Foix was not to be replaced. Fresh Swiss troops might be brought from the mountain reservoirs of men to fill the places of the crowds which had been slaughtered; but no second Gaston de Foix was to be had at need. And the French need of such a leader was soon seen to be of the sorest. After the great success at Ravenna, the fortunes of France in Italy declined so rapidly that by the end of June the French were entirely driven out of Italy,—to the eternal honour of Julius II., the warrior-Pope, write the Italian historians. And in truth there seems reason to believe that a certain amount of generous Italian feeling at least mingled with the political schemes and personal interests which animated Julius in his determination to drive the French invaders beyond the Alps. A.D. 1512.

The triumph of the Pope and his allies was on all sides complete, and the results of it may be considered as having definitively shaped the political destinies and geography of Italy into that form which they for the most part retained during the first three hundred years of the modern European era.*

Of course it fared ill with those who had been the partisans and allies of the French power in Italy. The cities of the duchy of Milan were subjected to ruinous war imposts for the payment of the large bodies of Swiss troops that had been hired mainly by the Pontiff. Alfonso of Este, Duke of Ferrara, who had been almost the only avowed ally of France beyond the limit of the States she claimed as her own, was compelled to present himself at Rome and submit to all the humiliating ceremonial of a formal absolution. With Florence it fared eventually worst of all. For though the Commonwealth in its trimming

* Guicciardini, Storia d'Italia, lib. x.; Ammirato, lib. xxviii.

A.D. 1512. caution and divided wishes and counsels had avoided any direct and open avowal of alliance with France, though the Pope and the armies of the League did not profess to consider the Republic as their enemy, and though Julius II. was content to distinguish between the Commonwealth and its Gonfaloniere Soderini, whom he was determined to crush in punishment of his decided and thorough-going French sympathies, and who was crushed accordingly, yet no avowedly hostile action could have been so fatal to the Republic as the apparently mild and moderate demands that her Gonfaloniere, Soderini, whose notorious partiality for the French alliance made him evidently incompatible with the new state of things, should be removed, and that the Medici should be restored—merely as private citizens—to their country.

These demands reached Florence about the middle of July, 1512, together with an intimation from the Pope that he should expect the Commonwealth to enter frankly into that League which he had made for the advantage and tranquillity of Italy. The Pope had previously, immediately after the decisive defeat of the French, sent an intimation to Florence, ordering the citizens to make processions and rejoicings for the delivery of Italy from the invader, "just as if," says one writer,* "they—the French—had been Turks and infidels." The French feeling in Florence was still sufficiently strong to make it exceedingly repugnant to the citizens to obey this order. And they had got out of the difficulty by saying that this was wholly an ecclesiastical and religious matter,—that it was for the Archbishop to obey his superior, and make what processions and church services he thought proper,—which was accordingly done. All the priests and the monks with their banners and candles marched about the city; *Te Deums* were sung, and the church bells were rung.

* Mecatti, ad ann.

But the citizens kept quietly within their houses the while; not a soul joined in the processions or attended the services; nor was the great bell of the *Palazzo Pubblico* permitted to be rung.* A.D. 1512.

It was sufficiently evident, therefore, that, despite the hostility to the Gonfaloniere existing chiefly among a certain number of leading citizens, the Republic was not in a mood to assent to the demands made by the Papal ambassadors. Yet Soderini himself admitted, in the debates that ensued upon them, that they appeared on the face of them moderate enough. That he should be called on for the good of the city to resign the station to which he had been raised by the citizens, was a matter, he said, of small importance. That it should be demanded that the Commonwealth should return to its old constitution of bimonthly Gonfalonieri, could not be deemed any great evil, since the State had lived and flourished under that constitution for more than two centuries. That the citizens who had been banished should wish to return to their native city, was no more than natural. Which among them all would not desire the same? *But*—what was concealed under all this? Did any human being believe that the Medici would be content to live in Florence as private citizens, assuming no pre-eminence over their fellow-citizens? If Florence intended to remain free, was it not absolutely necessary—did not every man in Florence know that it was absolutely necessary—to exclude the Medici as they would the pestilence?

In truth these arguments were entirely unanswerable. But what was to be done? The high-handed and triumphant Pope was determined and inexorable. The Cardinal de' Medici, with the ominous title of "Legate of Tuscany," was hovering at Bologna. Raimondo da Cordova, the Spanish Viceroy, at Naples, with a considerable

* Ammirato, lib. xxviii.

A.D. 1512. body of troops, was there also. What was to be done? After long debates, during three days, the only decision to which the Signory could come, was to have recourse to that old expedient which had so often been found to answer in the dealings of the Commonwealth with foreign princes,—an offer to pay money, if only they could be allowed to remain quiet, and at liberty to manage their own affairs as they thought fit.

But it would not do upon this occasion. The Medici could pay money also. It had been fully determined by the potentates, who with victorious arms in their hands were engaged in arranging the future political constitution of Italy, that the restitution of the Medici should form part of their programme. And it was absolutely necessary to answer affirmatively or negatively to the demands of the Pope and his allies. The decision at length was that the Commonwealth would be content to receive the Medici as private citizens; but would not consent to make any change in the present form of its government.

The result of this decision was the immediate invasion of Tuscany by the Viceroy, Raimondo da Cordova, with the Medici in his company, and the taking of the city of Prato, only twelve miles from Florence, by assault on the 30th of August, 1512.

The atrocious and abominable cruelty which was inflicted on that defenceless and almost undefended city, at the hands of the Papal and Spanish soldiery, under the very eyes of the Cardinal Legate, exceeded even the full measure of suffering usually awarded to captured cities by the war code of those cruel centuries. Unusually full accounts of these horrors by three different eye-witnesses have been preserved, and recently printed; * and the reader desirous of filling his imagination with the loathsome sights and

* In the first volume of the "Archivio Storico Italiano."

dreadful sounds that for twenty-three days made the city of Prato a more real and fearful hell than any which the fancy of the great poet could furnish forth, may find wherewithal to content himself in these pages. A briefer account, compiled from them, may also be read in the Life of Filippo Strozzi, by the present writer.* A.D. 1512.

The consternation and terror in Florence on hearing the fate of Prato were extreme. When the intelligence, that the Spanish army with the Cardinal de' Medici was about moving from Bologna towards Tuscany, reached the city, the Florentine government, with Gonfaloniere Soderini at its head, had thought it prudent to imprison all the more notable partisans of the Medicean faction to the number of forty; but their detention did not last long. They were arrested on the 27th of August; but on the night of the 30th the fall of Prato was known, and all was confusion and alarm in Florence. The forty prisoners were set at liberty; and Soderini, who must be admitted in this crisis to have shown more weakness of character than might have been expected from his previous conduct, left the *Palazzo Pubblico* secretly, and fled from Florence the same night.

Of course the friends of the Medici were up and active as soon as the news of the taking of Prato reached the city. Several of them, chiefly young men, whose mode of life and the state of whose fortunes made political change of any sort welcome to them, hurried to the palace as soon as the Gonfaloniere was out of it, and urged the Signory to vote his deposition from office.† This done, ambassadors were sent to the Viceroy and the Cardinal at Prato on the 31st of August, to see what terms could be made with them. It was agreed that Florence should enter the

* Life of Filippo Strozzi, Lond. 1860, p. 52.

† Ammirato, lib. xxviii. ad finem.

A.D. 1512. League, should undertake to pay a hundred-and-forty thousand ducats, and that the Medici should be received in the city as private citizens.

And thus the second * exile of the Medici, after having lasted for a period of eighteen years, came to an end.

* Counting that of Cosmo, Pater Patriæ, from 1432 to 1434, as the first.

BOOK X.

FROM THE RETURN OF THE MEDICI IN 1512,

TO

THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC IN 1531.

19 YEARS.

CHAPTER I.

The return of the Medici—Corrupt condition of the previous government, and of society generally—Appointment of new magistrates—Premature return to the city of Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici—Filippo Strozzi at Prato—His marriage with Clarice de' Medici—The Cardinal de' Medici and his cousin Giulio come to Florence on the 14th of September, 1512—Gradually make themselves masters of the city—Failure of the Florentines to understand the principles of liberty—A parliament called—New arrangements—Filippo Strozzi's prudence—Death of Julius II.—Election of the Cardinal de' Medici to the Papacy—Ambassador from the Emperor in Florence—Festivities in the city—Discontent rife in Florence notwithstanding—Conspiracy against the Medici of Agostino Capponi and Pietro Paolo Boscoli—Account of their last night in prison by Luca della Robbia—Theology at St. Mark's—Carnival keeping—Arbitrary taxation, and new method of levying the taxes—Rejoicing at Florence on the election of Leo X.—Results of that election on Florentine liberty—Creation of Cardinals by Leo—Lorenzo ostensibly at the head of the government—Real power in the hands of the Cardinal Giulio—League with the Emperor and Duke of Milan against France and Venice—Lorenzo appointed general-in-chief—Francis I. on the throne of France—Policy of the Pope—His negotiations with Francis—The French obtain possession of Milan—Agreement between the Pope and the French king—Sympathy between Leo X. and Francis I.—Interview between them at Bologna—Felony of the Duke of Urbino—How turned to account by Leo—The Pope's return to Rome—His stay at Florence—Charles V. succeeds to the throne of Naples—Medicean prospects—Lorenzo becomes Duke of Urbino—Creation of more Florentine Cardinals—Death of Giuliano de' Medici—His son Ippolito—French marriage of the Duke of Urbino—His bad state of health—His death—Death of his wife a few days previously—His daughter—Members of the family of Medici remaining after the death of Lorenzo.

The Medici were to return to the city as private citizens. That was the arrangement to which the Commonwealth had assented, and with which they and their supporters

A.D. 1512. professed to be content. But it is hardly credible that any single man in Florence believed that such would be the result of the step that was about to be taken. The change in question, which was effected by what the historian Nardi* calls "the furious nature of his Holiness" Pope Julius II., would hardly have seemed to the potentates of Italy to have been worth so much effort, and so many crimes, had its sole object been the restoration of a private family to their home. The large number of influential citizens who were, as Messer Giovanni Cambi, a thorough-going "Piagnone," and therefore hater of the Medicean name,† admits, anxious to return to the government of the Medici, assuredly comprehended perfectly well the nature and scope of the measure. Gonfaloniere Soderini, who felt that Florence was no longer a place for him, after the members of this private family had entered its gates, knew well enough what was coming.

It is curious, however, to find such a writer as Cambi, a simple-minded, pious, and thoroughly sincere man, an ardent and fanatical admirer of and believer in Savonarola, admitting, even while he is inveighing against any change in the form of government established by the prophet, that there was abundant reason to desire a change of some sort. All the evils under which the body social groaned in his time were in his view "judgments," "because justice was not done in Florence, nor the wickedness of the young restrained." Wickedness of the young! There was abundant wickedness of the old also,—of grey-bearded sinners, honest old Cambi's contemporaries, which to the full as sorely needed restraining. But the "judgments," which the historian deplores, are found to follow the delinquencies he censures with very considerable regularity; and his philosophy is only at fault in the matter, in that he

* Vol. ii. ed. cit., p. 10. † Deliz. Erudit. Tosc., vol. xxi. p. 246.

fails to recognise the remedial quality of such "judgments," —as indeed he might be expected to do, when we find him enumerating among them "snow two feet deep in the streets of Florence;"*—a phenomenon in perfect accordance, he thinks, with the "prophecy" of Savonarola, to the effect that any attempt to do away with the Great Council established by him should entail trouble and disaster. A.D 1512.

"So corrupt in truth had the manners of the time become," continues the historian, returning from speculations on the moral government of the world to the region of facts, in which he is a more valuable authority, "that the rising generation no longer as in the good old time (when Messer Giovanni's hair was black instead of grey) sought when choosing their wives, virtue, modesty, good birth, or beauty, but looked to money solely. So that instead of each rank marrying with its equals only, as was the case in better days (observe, that it is a republican of the radical sort who writes thus), any man of low birth, if he had enough money, could ally his daughter with any noble family. Dowers were given of 1500, 2000, and even 3000 florins;† and those who could not command these extravagant sums were, to the despair of fathers and mothers, left unmarried." And the consequence was, that there were then in Florence three thousand marriageable girls for whom no husbands could be found—an intolerable state of things, which later generations may consider themselves happy in knowing nothing of, even though it should have required still severer judgments than snow two feet deep in the streets to correct them!

"Immorality," continues the historian, "naturally in-

* Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxi. p. 246.

† It has been mentioned that a law had recently been passed, wholly ineffectually of course, for the purpose of restraining this enormity; a curious instance of the prevalent ideas as to what law could do, and what it ought to do.

A.D. 1512. creased under such circumstances, and got to such a height, that women of evil life would not be content to live in that part of the city which had been assigned to them, but came and lived in the streets inhabited by the respectable. And what was more pestilential still," groans honest Cambi, "they took to wearing the dresses of nuns, and conformed themselves to the habits of decent women, so that they could no longer be recognised for what they were."

Comfortable indeed is the reflection which naturally suggests itself to the modern English mind on reading such things, that this deplorable account applies to a dead-and-gone state of society, far removed both in time and space from our own.

"Violence too," proceeds Cambi, coming to matters more to the purpose as indicating the urgent necessity of reformation in the government, "was rife in the city to such an extent, that if any citizens went to the magistrates of police to complain, they were likely enough to be stabbed in the streets the next night; or perhaps the magistrates themselves replied to their complaints by saying, 'It's all very true; but I would fain be able to reach my home o' nights without being murdered when my term of office expires.' And so the complainant was dismissed; and justice was mocked. But, what was worst of all, these same magistrates would attend readily enough to what was asked of them, even if the requests were of the most improper nature, if interest were made with them through the intervention of one of those very women whose scandalous conduct was the cause of so much mischief."

Yet the "Piagnone" writer considers all these abominations to be judgments on the Florentines for wishing to change a government which, as he complains, acted thus abominably. It can scarcely be wondered at, that a community thus governed should be apt to think that any

change must be for the better. And though it would not have been true to assert, nor did the actors in the matter affect to pretend, that any such considerations were the motives of their conduct, it cannot be doubted that the general discontent produced by the intolerable state of things in the social life of the city contributed to facilitate the revolution which was on the point of being accomplished. A.D. 1512.

Every one knew, as has been said, that the return of the Medici as private citizens was an absurdity and an impossibility. Their adherents within the city were busy while they still remained at Prato,—remained there in that September weather with between five and six thousand corpses within the walls, and in the midst of all the horrors following the sack of the city. New magistrates were being appointed, and the legislative bodies remodelled according to inspirations received from the Cardinal, who was thus cautiously paving his way back to the old position of his family. But these changes were quite what Florence was accustomed to on such occasions.

In these so frequently-recurring revolutions the fickle city never did things by halves. When once the tide turned, it began to run strongly in opposition to its previous direction. The Ins had all to go out, and the Outs were all to come in. But in bringing about this change, appearances and the semblance of moderation were to be observed as far as was consistent with the attainment of the objects in view. It was for this reason that the two cautious Churchmen, the Cardinal Giovanni and his cousin Giulio, the Archbishop of Florence, sat patiently there among the corpses in the infected city of Prato biding their time.

The two younger members of the family who were with them, Giuliano, the younger brother of the Cardinal, now thirty-three years of age, and Lorenzo, the son of the elder

A.D. 1512. brother Pietro, now in his twenty-first year, were not so patient. In those first days of September, Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, impatient of the intrigues going on between Prato and Florence, went off of his own authority to the former city,* and brought back Giuliano de' Medici, and Lorenzo with him, to his own house in Florence, before the sentence of exile under which they lay had been regularly and formally repealed. Strictly, he had laid himself open by thus doing to all the pains and penalties fulminated against those who should hold communication with exiles, or in any way compass or plot for their return. But it was pretty clear how things were going in the city, and that the young Albizzi was not running any risk. The members of that great family, however, thought it necessary to call a family meeting to express their disapprobation and displeasure at the step their kinsman had taken; and they sent two of their members as a deputation to the Signory, excusing themselves, and explaining that Antonfrancesco had acted entirely on his own responsibility in the matter.

But there was no danger. On the second day after their arrival in the city, Giuliano, as Cambi tells us, ordered of the tailor a citizen's robe of purple lined with silk, and Lorenzo a black robe and doublet of crimson satin; their previous clothing having been, it must be understood, of a fashion different from that worn by Florentine citizens, the character of which they were now to assume. Thus attired, the two young men came openly out into the streets; and taking with them a couple of citizens, friends of the family, without any other retinue, waited on the Signory, and simply requested that their sentence of exile should be remitted, and that they should be restored to the rights of citizenship; a

* Cambi, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxi. p. 311.

demand which was put to the vote accordingly, and passed unanimously. A.D. 1512.

All which might be very well for a simple soldier like Giuliano, and a boy like Lorenzo. But the two priests, the Cardinal and his cousin Giulio, wanted a great deal more than this. They wanted to see their way back to sovereignty, and did not choose to enter the city till they had sufficiently prepared matters to make their course clear before them.

There was another remarkable Florentine citizen lingering there in Prato in company with the two priests,—a man who was then beginning to fill that prominent part in the history of his country and in the eye of his contemporaries which he continued to occupy till his death. This was Filippo Strozzi, son of the great banker, the founder of the still well-known Strozzi palace, and of one of the then largest fortunes in Florence. He was now only twenty-two, one year older than his brother-in-law Lorenzo; for Filippo Strozzi had ventured on the dangerous step of marrying Clarice, the sister of Lorenzo Medici, while the family yet lay under the ban of the Republic. He had thereby incurred the severe displeasure of the government; his conduct had been submitted to an inquisition, and he had with difficulty escaped more serious penalties at the cost of a fine and a short banishment. But the young Strozzi had already shown himself to be a prudent calculator and far-seeing politician, and was now, at Prato there, looking out for the reaping of that harvest which he had sown with such forecast in very different times. Filippo, though only twenty-two, did not accompany the two younger Medici into Florence, but remained with the seniors of the family, "quietly watching the course of things, and waiting till they should see fit to take him into their confidence." Lorenzo Strozzi, his younger brother and biographer, who was—he at least—a sincere repub-

A.D. 1512. lican, a "Piagnone," and consistent hater of the Medici, though inconsistently a devoted admirer and apologist of his brother,—Lorenzo Strozzi assures us that his brother lingered in Prato "in the hope of being serviceable to his country." And men think that countries may be served in such very different manners, that it is hard to say of any professing patriot that his country's benefit makes no part of his object.

At last, on the 14th of September,* the Cardinal and his cousin Giulio advanced from Prato to Florence, and entered the city, as Cambi records, "not with processions of the guilds of the city as was customary, being, as the Cardinal was, the Pope's Legate for Tuscany, but with an escort of men-at-arms and a retinue of Bolognese infantry,"† significant circumstances, of which the citizens did not fail to appreciate the full meaning and importance. And the sequel consistently enough carried out the promises of this beginning. On the following day the *Palazzo Pubblico* was quietly and gradually filled with armed men; the Great Council, the palladium of Florentine liberty in the eyes of the citizens, was dissolved and abolished; and though the Council of Eighty, the Signory, and the other portions of the old Florentine constitutional government, were left for the present nominally intact, the supreme power was lodged in the hands of a small board composed of creatures of the Medici.

Thus once again, after an exile of eighteen years, the fatal Medici were restored to Florence; once again fixed their fangs in the prey they had been scared away from, and "the most democratical democracy in Europe" was once again muzzled and chained. A conspiracy of priest and soldier,—that detestable and ominous combination, more baleful to humanity than any other of the poisonous

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. ed. Firenze, 1826, vol. ix. p. 229.

† Cambi, *loc. cit.*, p. 323.

mischiefs compounded out of its evil passions and blind stupidities,—had as usual trampled out the hopes and possibilities of social civilization and progress. Not that democratic Florence had advanced much towards the discovery of any true principles of liberty. We have seen that the citizens, when left to their own guidance, had but very imperfect notions on that subject. We have seen that for want of any real reverence for human opinion, which is a virtue hardly to be attained to by a people trained in and moulded by the Catholic religion, a free State was, according to their ideas, one in which a large number of its members was permitted to share in the luxury of tyrannizing. And we have been forced to the conclusion, that, in fact, real individual liberty of action and development, which can only be assured by a philosophical intelligence of the due limits to the right society has to constrain individual will, was nearly as much unknown to them in their intervals of pure republicanism as under their tyrants. All this is true. But in the former condition their social system was plastic; in the latter it was rigid. In the one case there were movement, change, competition, collision of mind, life, and therefore the assured hope of progress and development. In the other there were fixedness, stagnation, absence of hope, the impossibility of development, and progress deathwards only. Under one set of circumstances the liquor was in a state of fermentation, and would have worked itself clear. Under the other it was stagnant, and hastened towards decay and putridity. A.D. 1512.

The Medici were in their ancestral palace in the Via Larga; the *Palazzo Pubblico* was full of strange troops; there were soldiers in the *Piazza*, soldiers at the gates, soldiers in the streets, soldiers everywhere. And then the old farce which had been played so often, and which the citizens must surely by this time have well known to be a farce, was played over again. The great bell of the palace

A.D. 1512. was rung, and the people called to parliament in the great square,—the square well lined with troops, it is to be understood; with strange and barbarous hireling troops, cut-throat ruffians, gathered from the offscourings of all nations, renegade Mussulman Moors, some of them from Spain, in the service of the Viceroy; between whom and the Florentines the only relationship of sentiment was that which exists between the famished wolf and the fat sheep; men who comprehended far less than a party of red Indian warriors and sachems might have done of the nature of the business in hand, and only waited wolfish-eyed for the signal that might loose them unmuzzled from the leash. Under such superintendence the free parliament was held. The propositions were made in the time-honoured fashion, and the populace shouted their "Ay, ay!" not very loudly or lustily, I think, but in the right place. And previous laws were duly repealed, and a "balia" appointed. All the old words and names are preserved; so the proceedings were eminently constitutional. And "forty-eight" citizens were added to the Signory, with power to "re-elect themselves" for a second year. Then the "balia" was increased to the number of "sixty-six," and "twelve procuratori" were to be chosen by the "sixty-six," who were to consider and propose "what was for the good of the city."

There is something nauseous in the minute care with which the historians record all these puerilities, the "forty-eight," and the "sixty-six" who re-elect themselves, and "the twelve," who are to do what the masters in the Palazzo Medici bid them. Was it possible that all this rigmarole could still serve as dust to throw in the eyes of the citizens? Surely the mockery might have been spared.

It is to be supposed that each of the members of all these boards imagined himself to be partaking in some sort

in the advantages to be derived from "belonging to the government," to be enjoying some pre-eminence over his fellows, and reaping the reward of his adherence to the Medicean fortunes. Filippo Strozzi, on whose young shoulders was one of the longest heads that day in Florence, had no office, notwithstanding the closeness of those long closetings with the Cardinal and his cousin Giulio at Prato, and notwithstanding his Medicean wife. The less sagacious friends of the Strozzi family were indignant at this neglect. But Filippo knew very well what he was about. He was well-minded to have his share of the chesnuts, but had no intention whatever of putting his own hand near the fire for the pulling of them out. Magnificently draping himself in a mantle of republican virtue, when the friends of his family somewhat sneeringly condole with him on his exclusion from the honours of the new government, he says (taking care to be overheard by a fitting audience of bystanders): "Do you not know, my friends, that Florence has been sold? And is it to be expected that I, who was not one of the sellers, should receive any part of the price?"* A.D. 1513.

Presently, however, when, on the 20th of February, 1513, "the furious nature" of his Holiness Pope Julius II. was quieted for ever, and our Cardinal posts up in all haste to Rome to see whether mayhap Providence, in the utter inscrutableness of its wisdom, may consider him, Giovanni de' Medici, as the best and fittest person to be entrusted with Heaven's Vicegerency on earth, our prudent young friend Filippo Strozzi accompanies him on the journey as his friend, companion, and banker. Especially in this last capacity was Filippo necessary to the aspiring Cardinal, so soon to become Pope by the grace of God and the capital of Strozzi.

* Vita di F. Strozzi, by Lorenzo, ed. cit., p. xxxiii.

A.D. 1513. Before the old Pope's death, while the Cardinal de' Medici was still only "a private citizen" of Florence, there were, during the latter months of 1512, splendid doings in that city of a not altogether republican kind. "Gurgens," as the Italian historians call him, thus abbreviating the Latin title "Episcopus Gurgensis," the Bishop of Gurck, came to Florence as ambassador from the Emperor, and was received by the Medici, and by other citizens, their adherents, as the Pucci and Tornabuoni, with unprecedented pomp and splendour. And it is curious to mark the gratified vanity with which the contemporary Florentine writers, however little they may have approved of the state of political affairs that led to all this royal-like magnificence, record the splendours of the gala doings. Even old Cambi, strict Piagnone and republican as he was, feels an evident satisfaction in making his homely page glitter with the details of gold brocade, velvet, and* satin. "Gurgens" was going to Rome on business of his master the Emperor, and as he happened to be passing that way he thought he might as well ask the Florentines, *i.e.*, the Medici, if they had any objection to pay up at once a portion of the forty thousand ducats which was agreed to be given to his Imperial master as his little perquisite on the occasion of putting the Medici back again into Florence. The time stipulated for the payment was not indeed yet come; but as he happened to be passing Of course the magnificent Medici—*i.e.*, the citizens—complied instantly with so small a request, and paid ten thousand of the sum into the Bishop's palm with the greatest pleasure.†

And the old festal life of the past Medicean period was once again seen in Florence. The young princes, Giuliano and Lorenzo, amused the citizens almost daily with spectacles and pageants, or diversions of some kind.

* Cambi, *loc. cit.*, p. 330. † Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1271.

All was not festivity and rejoicing, however, in Florence. A.D. 1513.
There were obstinate men whose eyes the Medicean gold brocade and satin did not charm; to whom gallant never-so-fine pageants in quiet orderly streets and *piazzas*, kept quiet and orderly by foreign troops, were nauseous; jaundiced-eyed men, who stood sullenly aloof at street corners, as the flaunting throng of rising-sun worshippers streamed past them. These men thought bitterly of the words Soderini had spoken in his last speech to the Signory, and the other citizens, engaged in deliberation on the question of deposing him in obedience to the behest of the Medici and "furious" Pope Julius. Had not the old man warned them that, despite the troubles and varied evils which were then threatening and tormenting the Commonwealth, the day would come when the citizens would with bitter regret appreciate, when it should be too late, the paramount happiness of openly speaking each man his free thought, "without carefully scanning the face of him whom he addressed, to see how far he could venture to do so!"

There were two such men, Agostino the son of Luca Capponi, and Pietro Pagolo * Boscoli, who unhappily had failed to peer anxiously enough into the eyes of some of those to whom they had spoken their thoughts. Capponi was, like others of his name, a man of action; but his friend Boscoli was a retired student—a man who pored over books, "though he could with difficulty see them," says Ammirato,† "because of his excessive whiteness of complexion,"—an Albino. They were both quite young men. And book-worm Boscoli, with his pale eye an inch from the page, had pored over old stories,—of Jael and Sisera, and Brutus, and the like,—till he thought that even his dim sight would suffice to direct a dagger to the heart

* A Tuscan familiar, and generally caressing, form of Paolo.

† Lib. xxix. Gonf. 1273.

A.D. 1513. of a tyrant. The two young ones of the brood, Giuliano and Lorenzo, were the objects of this conspiracy: a very witless conspiracy, poor boys, which the watchful spies of the Cardinal and his brother priest * and cousin, Giulio, had little difficulty in discovering. Theirs was the first blood with which the new despotism was cemented. They were condemned to die; † and there is an exceedingly curious and interesting account of their last night in the Bargello prison, written by Luca della Robbia, a great nephew of the famous artist of the same name, who, as the intimate friend of Boscoli, spent it with them.‡ The paper, we are told, was passed about in MS. from hand to hand in Florence, was eagerly read, "and wetted by many tears." Among the most curiously suggestive circumstances recorded in it, is the utter refusal of the condemned men, especially of Boscoli, to have anything to say to the confessor appointed to attend upon them by the authorities. They earnestly besought their friend to obtain for them *a friar from St. Mark's*, on the expressed ground that one of that community would be more likely to sympathise with the motives which had led to the conduct for which they were to suffer. With some difficulty a friar from St. Mark's was obtained, one Frà Cipriano, who shrove the condemned men. And here is the worthy friar's judgment respecting his penitent, as expressed by him afterwards to good Luca, who thus records it:—

"I asked him what he thought of Boscolo? He began

* Giulio de' Medici was not made Archbishop of Florence till the 23rd of April, 1513.

† Ammirato, lib. xxix. *ibid.*

‡ It has been printed in the first volume of the Archivio Storico Italiano Firenze, 1842, and is extremely well worth reading, as a singularly graphic and striking illustration of the manners and habits of thought of the time. The reader, who has not the means of referring to the original, may consult a brief notice of this interesting little work in the "Athenæum" for 21st of April, 1849.

to weep; and said, 'Ah, would that he were yet living! But God gathers in his fruit in due season. I have never known a more vigorous mind. I should never have been able to receive a general confession in that noisy place * (for Agostino, you know, never ceased crying aloud and recommending himself to God, in such a way that I could not approve of it); I could never have confessed him in the midst of such a noise, I say, if he had not had a very powerful mind. It sufficed merely to hint a thing to him. I wept,' added Frà Cipriano, 'almost unceasingly for eight days; and could not satiate myself with tears, so much love did he win from me during that night.' I then asked him what opinion he had formed respecting his soul? He answered me: 'I firmly believe that he is among the blessed, and has not had to go into Purgatory. And to tell you my own opinion (but,' said he, 'these are not things to talk about; for then men say, these friars always make out that things go according to their own opinions and sympathies; however, I will say it to you, but keep it to yourself) I believe that he was beyond all doubt a martyr; for I found in him an excellent and most courageous intention, to such a degree that I was astonished at it. Be very sure, Luca, that there are very few born like him. He was a young man of infinite firmness, and of excellent intentions. And as for that matter, that you spoke to me about that night, that I must not forget that conspiracies are unlawful; let me tell you that St. Thomas makes this distinction,—either tyrants are set over nations by the act of the people themselves, or they reign by force and sudden violence in spite of the will of the people. In the first case it is not lawful to conspire

A.D. 1513.

* The condemned cell of the Bargello, where, it should seem, various visitors were allowed to be with the men about to die, during the last night; —the "Neri," whose office it was to comfort condemned prisoners, and others.—Agostino di Agostino Capponi, the other prisoner.

A.D. 1513. against a tyrant; in the second case it is praiseworthy to do so.' And this," subjoins good Luca della Robbia, "I afterwards read myself."* And so finishes his account of this last night in the condemned cell of a sixteenth-century prisoner.

Curious enough, this theology of a friar of St. Mark's. Curious, too, that it should have been a known fact that theology of that complexion was to be found there at need, and not elsewhere in Florence. It would seem that the purging of the convent after Savonarola's death, by the wholesale banishment and proscription of his most noted followers and disciples, was to little purpose. This thoroughgoing republicanism and hatred to the Medici seems to have become the *genius loci*, and to have saturated the walls. Intelligible enough, too, that "these things," as good Frà Cipriano said of his doctrine concerning conspiracies and the eternal prospects of conspirators, "were not matters to be talked of" in Florence! It is noteworthy also, that the Friar of St. Mark's assumes it as an admitted and incontrovertible fact, that the recent restoration of the Medici had been effected by external force against the will of the people. And it seems never to have occurred to him that cases were likely to arise, respecting which it might puzzle St. Thomas himself to say to which of his two categories of tyranny they belong.

Outside the Bargello prison meantime, while these two young conspirators were awaiting the stroke of the Medicean executioner, the city was wearing a very different aspect, invited by the two younger Medici, Giuliano and his nephew Lorenzo, "to join in a little festivity for the Carnival, in order to let it be seen that the city was festively inclined, and in flourishing condition.† But it

* Archivio Storico Italiano, vol. i. p. 309.

† Cambi, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxii. p. 2.

was in fact," continues the *Piagnone* chronicler, who, like so many others of his way of thinking, looked on the present state of things, and on this Medicean carnival-keeping, with bitter and ill-concealed aversion,—Florence was "in fact like one who goes in masquerade; clothed in silk and golden tissue, he looks powerful and rich; but when he has pulled off his mask and his fine clothes, he is just what he was before and no better. These two companies (that composed of the friends and companions of Giuliano, and the other of the younger contemporaries of Lorenzo) made triumphal pageants. The first, that of Lorenzo, represented the first four ages of human life, each person being richly ornamented in correspondence with the time of life he represented. The whole of the pageant was carried on waggons, or triumphal cars rather, one for each of the four ages, drawn by richly caparisoned oxen. The show thus went through the city on the Sunday before the last day of Carnival, which was on the 6th of February. And they spent on this seventeen hundred florins. The other pageant, that of Giuliano, went forth on the last day of Carnival, the 8th of February, from the second to the eighth hour after sunset. Each of these two pageants had a song setting forth in fiction the subject represented, which they went singing before the houses of those who gave the festival, or of their friends. And thus the people were fed with rubbish and follies, and took no heed of penitence. Yet they had seen the scourge at Brescia,* and again at Prato; they saw Italy full from one end to the other of barbarian troops; they saw that God was threatening us, ay, even now was scourging us; and yet they did worse than ever! Oh! may God in His mercy not look upon these our sins! This second company spent as much as the first! And all this they did because

A.D. 1513.

* When taken by the troops of the league from France.

A.D. 1513. the said Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici had returned to their country as chiefs of the city, like their fathers were before them, after having been banished for eighteen years! Then on the 17th of February they laid an arbitrary tax * of 4600 florins on the city, payable in six rates within the year."

A new scheme was invented also at this time, as Cambi goes on to explain, by which the city was divided into a number of small districts, the entire tax portioned out among these, and all the tax-payers of each district made liable to the penalties of the "specchio," † if the entire portion due by the district was not paid.

Meanwhile the Cardinal was preparing for the great object of his ambition, which the dangerous illness of Julius II. was opening to him. And he started for Rome the day before the death of the two conspirators left by him for execution.

Great was the exultation and jubilee at Florence when the news of the election of Leo X., the first Florentine Pope, reached the city. The sacred College had gone into conclave on the 4th of March; the announcement of the election was made about four o'clock in the afternoon of the 11th of the same month; and, according to Cambi,‡ the news was known at Florence in the almost incredibly short space of from five to six hours, having reached the city at three hours after sunset the same evening. Of course all the Medicean faction were triumphantly exultant and overjoyed. Of course, also, the friends of the Medici

* "Un albitrio," writes worthy cockney Cambi in the Florentine popular speech of his day; the word thus used by itself to signify a lawless impost, indicating clearly enough the shape in which arbitrary power was most wont to show itself to the citizens.

† The "specchio," it will be remembered, was the register, on which the names of all in arrears with their taxes were inscribed; and the appearance on which involved suspension from all the rights of the franchise.

‡ Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxii. p. 7.

were more numerous in these days of their prosperity than they had been in the days of their depression and exile, when the avowal of friendship for them brought penalties and danger with it. And it is easy to understand that this new and immense accession to the dignity, power, wealth and influence of the family furnished many a prudent time-server with a pretext for declaring even to his own servile conscience,—that further opposition to the Medicean ascendency was a manifest running counter to the designs and purposes of Providence. But there were also feelings of a different kind contributing to swell the tide of Florentine gratulation at the election of a Florentine Pope,—feelings of a class to which the municipal patriotism of the mediæval Italian cities was peculiarly sensible. There was not a Florentine citizen who did not feel that he had a share in the glory of the Florentine Pope. He is our man! But in the case in question the sense of present glory was rendered keener by the anticipation of future profit. Very rich and general was the golden shower that might be expected from the heaven of the Vatican to rain upon the favoured Gideon's-fleece of Florence. And assuredly the new Pope did not disappoint the expectations of his countrymen in this respect. Leo X. must be admitted to have been a Florentine to his heart's core, even though he were a Florentine tyrant. He would do anything for Florence save give her her liberty. Florentine Cardinals became plentiful as flowers in May. All the rich and lucrative offices of the Apostolic court were conferred on Florentines; not a little to the disgust of the Roman world. With all this in presence and in prospect, *in esse* and *in posse*, it cannot be thought surprising that the rejoicing in Florence over the election of Leo X. was loud, and for the most part sincere. Even old puritanical *Piagnone* Cambi admits that Giovanni de' Medici became Pope "by the grace of God, and not by

A.D. 1513.

A.D. 1513. simony,"*—though it may be fairly suspected that if it had not been a Florentine Cardinal who had travelled up to Rome on hearing the news of the Pontiff's death, with a wealthy and dissolute young banker for his travelling companion, whose capital was notoriously to be used to support the election,† the virtuous Piagnone would hardly have been so ready to absolve him from all stain of simony.

The city was delighted with the election of the Florentine Pope, little foreseeing how important a step that election was in the chain of events that was hurrying on the final destruction of even the empty form of the decrepit liberty of the Commonwealth. It was not so much that the election of Leo X. enabled the Medici to establish themselves firmly in the position they had recently regained, as that the elevation of Leo in 1513 secured that of Giulio his cousin, as Clement VII. ten years later, and thus put the latter in a position to traffic with the Emperor Charles V. on the basis of securing the Dukedom of Florence, with despotic power, for the illegitimate son of the Pope, married to the illegitimate daughter of the Emperor.

The first act of Leo X. was to create his cousin Giulio a Cardinal, despite the canon which excluded one of illegitimate birth from that dignity. And several other Florentines were nominated at the same time. The absolute government of the city had by this time become centred almost entirely in the hands of Lorenzo, the eldest son of Pietro. The Cardinal Giulio, churchman as he was, was a fitter man to rule than the profligate young scapegrace Lorenzo: for he had at least a certain amount of intelligence, habits of business, and industry. But the Medici preferred that the supreme power should, at all events

* Cambi, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxii. p. 7.

† Vita di Filippo Strozzi, by his brother, Lorenzo, ed. cit.

ostensibly, be vested in the head of the house, because the notion and practice of an hereditary sovereignty in their family was thus fostered and built up. A.D. 1515.

Everything was done therefore to enhance the dignity and greatness of the inheritor of the Medicean fortunes. It was still premature to declare him sovereign prince of the Republic with the style of Duke or any other such feudal title. But it was possible to give him princely military rank, as was done by making him General, with supreme and absolute authority, of all the Tuscan forces contributed by the Commonwealth to the armies of a new league formed in 1515 by the Emperor, the King of Aragon, the Duke * of Milan, and the Florentines, against France and Venice. On the 1st of January, 1515, Louis XII. of France had died, and was succeeded by Francis I., who soon manifested his intention of leading the armies of France once again across the Alps. The young monarch was fired with the ambition of making good those claims which had tempted Louis to so many disasters and disgraces. And the danger, which thus menaced Italy afresh, necessitated a renewal of that formidable league originally formed under the auspices of Julius II. Lorenzo received the insignia of his new office on the 12th of August, 1515; and much about the same time Giulio de' Medici, the new Cardinal, was appointed to the important office of Legate of Bologna.

The Pope, fortunately as it turned out for the interests of Italy, had not formally joined in the new league against Francis, feeling not indisposed to friendly relations with France, though fully purposed, as far as in him lay, to prevent the duchy of Milan from falling into the hands of any transalpine power. Francis on his part had endeavoured to induce the Pontiff to agree to his views on Milan, avail-

* Maximilian Sforza, the son of Ludovico, restored to his father's duchy, after the expulsion of the French, by the league formed by Julius II.

A.D. 1515. ing himself for the purpose of this negotiation of the family connection which existed between him and the Medici.* For Giuliano had recently married Filiberta, the sister of Charles, Duke of Savoy, and of Luisa, the mother of Francis I. It is observable that we hear nothing more, on the occasion of this marriage, of the law which prohibited a Florentine citizen from intermarrying with any member of a foreign princely family. And in the changed circumstances of Florence and of Italy, it was perhaps as well for the interest of the city, at the present conjuncture, that there should exist this point of contact between the Medicean Pontiff and the French king.

The negotiations which took place on either side were rendered fruitless, as far as the duchy of Milan was concerned, by the rapidity of the successes achieved by Francis. On the 13th of September the French inflicted a very severe and complete defeat on the Swiss troops, to whom the defence of Milan was entrusted, at San Donato; and this was followed by the almost immediate submission of the whole duchy, with the exception of the citadels of Cremona and Milan, in the latter of which Maximilian Sforza shut himself up. The Viceroy of Naples, abandoning under these circumstances the hope of being able to effect anything for the protection of northern Italy, retired to the south towards Naples; and serious fears were entertained that Francis, flushed with his easily-won triumph, might be tempted to push his success, and turn his arms against Tuscany, or even Rome itself.†

Nothing could be now done by mediation for Milan. But the Pontiff, whom danger to Florence touched quite as sensibly, or perhaps more so, than danger even to Rome, pushed on his negotiations with the French monarch by means of Giuliano de' Medici, and his nuncio the Bishop

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1287. † *Ibid.*, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1289.

of Tricarico, so actively and successfully, that news reached Florence on the 21st of October, 1515, that an alliance had been concluded between the Holy Father and the French king, for the mutual defence of their Italian states, the king obliging himself specially to protect the Pontiff, Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici, and the Florentines; and the Pope on his part giving up to France, Parma and Piacenza, as recognised dependencies of the duchy of Milan. It was further agreed that both Giuliano and Lorenzo should receive commissions in the French service, with pay and pensions; and that all the salt required for the duchy of Milan should be brought from the Papal salt works of Cervia. It was moreover settled, that in order to promote good intelligence and friendship for the future between the King and the Pope, a meeting should take place as soon as possible between them at Bologna.* A.D. 1515.

If there had indeed been danger to Florence from the ambition of the French king, that danger had been escaped by this "good intelligence," brought about in a great measure by the circumstance of the family connection, but due also in some degree to the assimilated characters of the two parties to it. Leo X. and Francis I. were eminently well calculated to like and sympathise with each other. Both men were adorned by a curiously similar superficial varnish of seeming good qualities, of the kind which most readily captivate the indulgence and admiration of the masses of mankind; both were rendered in reality worthless by the same vices, deeply rooted in the nature of them, of a sort essentially incompatible with the reality of those good qualities for which the dazzled world gave them credit. The profligate young monarch was certainly not more unscrupulous in the pursuit of pleasure than the older, though still young,† Pontiff; nor did he pursue with

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1289.

† He was only thirty-nine at the time of his election.

A.D. 1515. more unbridled excess the career which led him to an early and shameful death, than did the "Holy Father" follow the same path, which duly conducted him also, at an earlier period, to the same foul and disgraceful goal. Both were possessed of that kindly *bonhomie* which waits on good digestion, and is not inconsistent with the intensest selfishness and the most revolting cruelty. Both were magnificent and munificent "patrons of literature and art"; which means, that they had both sufficient capacity to prefer lively intelligence to dull stupidity in those around them; that they were capable of being amused; sensitive to the material forms of beauty; and reckless in squandering sums wrung from the hard earnings of horny-handed labour for the gratification of these tastes. Splendid monarchs both! on whose lives and works kings and despots may look back with aversion, rather than the descendants of those who suffered from them; for that which remains of them, still extant and operative in the world, is their contribution to the slow advance of mankind towards the coming impossibility of all papacies and despotisms.

Pope Leo passed through Florence on his way to this projected interview with a kindred spirit in November. He reached Bologna, where the interview was to take place, on the 7th of December;* and there "talked as may be supposed on many subjects," says the courtly historian, "amid great marks of humanity and affection, being, as they were both of them by nature, liberal and magnanimous." †

Among the matters arranged, however, it was certainly, says the Florentine historian, settled that France was finally to abandon all complaint or claim against Florence on the score of her not having duly observed all the agreements and stipulations made between the

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Conf. 1290. † *Ibid.*

Commonwealth and Louis XII.; and that, whether Florence had performed her agreements, or had failed to do so, neither she nor her territory were to be at any time molested by France. And the King further promised, that he would never take any city of Tuscany under his protection. His Majesty was, however, exceedingly urgent in his demands on the Pontiff, that Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, should be left in unmolested possession of his dukedom. This, however, he failed to obtain from Leo, who had designs in his head altogether incompatible with any such promise. The fact was that this unfortunate duke had some time since murdered a certain Cardinal Alidosio in a sudden fit of passion. Had the Duke of Urbino murdered any other, or any dozen of other persons, or even had anybody save a sovereign prince murdered a Cardinal, the deed would have long since been forgotten: indeed, Julius II., not being at leisure to turn the matter to the profit it was susceptible of being made to yield, and not wishing to make more enemies than those he already had to deal with, had admitted the duke to make his peace, and receive pardon. But now, with such a nephew as Lorenzo de' Medici to be properly provided for, and with such a chance of making the Medici veritable princes, and thus immensely facilitating the last step which had yet to be made to reach the avowed erection of a throne in Florence, the real murder of a member of the Sacred College by the owner of an Italian duchy, was far too providential and valuable an opportunity to be lost. So the Holy Father replied to all the urgent requests of King Francis that the Duke of Urbino should be left in peace, that he could not in conscience take upon him to promise this, that the crime was too flagrant, and that if it were left unpunished the example would be deplorably pernicious.* A.D. 1515.

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1290.

A.D. 1515. On the 22nd of December, 1515, Leo again passed through Florence on his way back to Rome. He had had eighteen cardinals with him when he travelled northwards, but he returned with twelve only in his suite, the remaining six having accompanied the king on his return journey to Milan.

On both these occasions of the Pope's presence in his native city there were, as may be imagined, gala doings, ecclesiastical and secular, on a very magnificent scale. The Florentines were in those days, and for a couple of centuries later, particularly celebrated for their skill in devising and executing all kinds of temporary festal erections in the streets and piazzas of the city, imitations of celebrated buildings, allegorical devices, statues, machines spouting water or spouting fire, ludicrous figures in caricature, moved in strange manners by hidden machinery, and other such somewhat child-like diversions. And long accounts of the curious devices which were executed for the amusement and honour of the Pope and his retinue, are preserved by the contemporary chroniclers. Leo on his side was not to be outdone in magnificence. He presented to the church of Santa Maria del Fiore, "as a mark of the tender affection he bore to that church, in which he had been a canon when a little child," a mitre "of such beauty, and adorned with so many pearls, sapphires, emeralds, diamonds, and rubies, that it was worth more than ten thousand ducats." He gave to Gonfaloniere Ridolfi, in the name of the Republic, a sword of honour and "a blessed cap." He conferred on the chapter of the cathedral the right of legitimatizing illegitimate children. He increased the value of the prebends of the church, and on departing from the city left a large number of days' "indulgence" at all the principal altars.*

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1290.

Nothing could seem brighter than the Medicean prospects when the Pope left Florence for Rome on the 19th of February, 1516. Very timely and agreeable news came, while he was yet at Florence, of the death of Ferdinand, the Catholic King of Aragon, on the 15th of January. He was succeeded, it is true, as we know, by a certain portentous Charles I., afterwards the fifth emperor of the name; but the wonders which made that succession so portentous to the world were still beneath the horizon. The tidings of the death of Ferdinand were meantime very welcome in Florence, inasmuch as under the auspices of our great Florentine Pope we are now once more sailing on the tack of French alliance and protection. Our "first citizen" Lorenzo is in a fair way to become a sovereign prince by grace of God, or at all events clearly by grace of God's vicegerent on earth;—does become, after a little* backward and forward struggling, "Duke of Urbino," vice Francesco Maria della Rovere, deposed for felony. This is "naturally very flattering" to Florentine feelings; and it would be very bad taste in these times to allude to those bygone old laws made in our *roturier* days anent connections between princes and Florentine citizens. And really his Grace the Duke of Urbino, despite what some old puritans may say and hint in corners, does not rule the city so badly after all,—sharply looked after as he is by our Holy Father, his shrewd uncle; by his yet shrewder and long-headed cousin the Archbishop and Legate. He was assisted, moreover, by a whole host of able and experienced Florentine cardinals, another batch of whom were created in 1517 by our thorough-going Florentine Pope.

A.D. 1516.

* The war against the Duke of Urbino, which resulted in his final dispossession of his duchy, is recorded to have cost eighty thousand ducats, the most of which sum was furnished by the Florentines, "by reason of the great power which the family of Medici held in our city."—Mecatti, op. cit. ad ann. 1517.

A.D. 1516. That at least must be said of him, whatever else he may have been. When manifest destiny is so plainly declaring itself, when the bounteous skies are thus raining honours and good things of all sorts on favoured Florence, who would not cry, "Hurrah for the Balls!"* and hold out his cap to catch his share of them?

But while the ship of the Medicean fortunes was thus scudding before the favouring breeze, "grim Fate stood by and smiled." A Pope can do much: but his power unhappily stops short at the limits of the physical world. Moral wrong he can make right, of course: but he can alter no tittle of physical law. All he can do is to ignore, and insist on the world's ignoring it. The worst of it is that this in no wise impedes its action.

On the 17th of March, 1516, Giuliano, the younger brother of his Holiness, died. It was a severe blow,—a shock to the fabric of the Medicean greatness, but not a fatal one. It was unfortunate that he left no heir;—no legitimate heir that is to say. He did leave a son, Ippolito, born in 1511, every inch a Medici, let who might be the mother. And for illegitimate Bah! with a Pope for his uncle!

Unfortunate, though, this untimely death of Giuliano certainly was, for it was by him that we were connected with the royal house of France; a connection of which we so lately saw the important advantages. But this too may in some degree be remedied. There is his grace the Duke of Urbino to be married,—rather a more graceless grace than could be wished perhaps,—but that is all the greater reason for getting him married. He shall go to France for a wife. We may not hope to find at a moment's

* The "Palle," the well known balls which were the armorial bearing of the Medici. "Palle! Palle!" was the well-known party cry of the Medicean faction; and the adherents of the family were called "Palleschi."

notice so near a connection with the French crown as fortune ("Providence," we mean; are they not the thoughts of a Pope that we are putting into words?) provided for us in the former instance. But there is the noble lady, Maddalena, daughter of Jean de la Tour d'Auvergne et de Boulogne, and of Jeanne de Bourbon. She will do; and surely may be had for a Pope's nephew, sovereign Duke of Urbino. Let his grace set forth for France to bring home his bride. We, the Florentine Pope, with our Providence, and the Florentine Cardinals, with our superintendence, and the Florentine citizens, with our purses, and the Florentine artisans, with our labour: we will take care that our Lorenzo goes for his bride with such a following at his back, and such a pomp as might shame that of a king. A.D. 1518.

Not fit to travel, our gallant gay Lorenzo! Still less fit to ride in the pageant tournaments given in honour of his espousal! Least fit of all to marry! What prate of vulgar leeches is this? Physical laws! What is this of new and horrible forms of malady unknown to former generations? Youthful excesses! It would be odd if unlimited use of absolutions, dispensations, indulgences, would not put all such matters right.

Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, did accordingly set forth for France, and with much ado performed the journey. He did marry the unfortunate young victim of state policy selected to be his wife, and returned with her to Florence in the autumn of the year 1518. But on the 5th of the following May, the heretical physical laws, unheeding absolution or dispensation, had taken their course, and the Duke of Urbino died seven days after the death of the young wife, whom this loathsome marriage had consigned also to a premature death.*

* The details of Lorenzo's journey to France, of his marriage, and of the deaths of his wife and himself, may be read in a volume on "The Girlhood of Catherine de' Medici," by the present writer

A.D. 1519. Before dying, the hapless lady had given birth to a daughter, one Catherine, afterwards heard of as a not unimportant instrument of Medicean policy, and subsequently as Queen of France.

One daughter, but, alas! no son. So that after this sudden sweep of Death's falchion among the Medici, there were left of the elder branch,—of the descendants, that is, of Cosmo, "Pater Patriæ,"—only the two priests, Leo X. and the Cardinal Giulio, afterwards Clement VII.; two illegitimate lads, Ippolito the son of Giuliano, and an Alessandro, not hitherto mentioned, of uncertain parentage on both sides, generally considered to be a son of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, but more probably the offspring of the Cardinal Giulio;* and lastly, the infant Catherine.

* The real parentage of Alessandro has always been a matter of doubt among the Italian writers. But Ammirato asserts that Cosmo, who, on the death of Alessandro became Duke of Florence, and shortly afterwards first Grand Duke of Tuscany, told him, the historian, that Alessandro was the son of Clement, by a maid-servant.—Ammirato, lib. xxx. Gonf. 1347.

CHAPTER II.

Medicean prospects at the death of Lorenzo—The Cardinal Giulio visits Florence—The death-bed of Lorenzo—The Cardinal after Lorenzo's death—Character of Giulio;—of Leo X.;—of Lorenzo—Conduct of the Cardinal after Lorenzo's death—Nardi's opinion of it—Labour imposed on the Cardinal—Absence of all real liberty in Florence—Silvio Passerini, Cardinal of Cortona, appointed the Cardinal de' Medici's Lieutenant in Florence—Character of his government—Duchy of Urbino—Troubles arising from the dispossession of the late Duke—Change in the Papal policy—Breach with France—Difficult position of the Pontiff—League between the Pope and Charles V.—War with France in Lombardy—Jealousies between the Generals of the Imperial and Papal forces—Success of the Imperial arms against France—Death of Leo X.—Cause of it—Fresh troubles with the Duke of Urbino—Election of Adrian VI. to the Papacy—His character;—and failure—Troubles of the interregnum—Florentines saddled with expenses arising hence—Adrian reaches Rome—Intrigues between Cardinal Soderini, of Volterra, and the French king—French forces under Renzo da Ceri effectually opposed by the Florentine forces under Conte Rangoni—Giovanni delle Bande Nere, offended, joins the French—Florence taxed in order to lend money to the Duke of Milan—Florentines love equality rather than liberty;—hence disposed to submit to the Medicean ascendancy—Impartial despotism of the Cardinal Giulio—Discovery of the Rucellai Garden conspirators—Escape of some of the conspirators—Execution of others—Success of the conspiracy would have been dangerous to Florence.

Yes, it was a heavy blow to the Medicean fortunes, this succession of untimely deaths. Death was always an impatient creditor with these splendid Medici. They were very notably a short-lived race. Such exceedingly splendid lives were perhaps in some sort incompatible with longevity.

A.D. 1519. And now, what was to be done by the two Medicean priests, the Pope and the Cardinal, with a female infant on their hands as the sole future representative of their house? Give up the game? make a virtue of necessity? cast away the ambition for which so many generations of their race had plotted, laboured, suffered, and sinned, and restore Florence to liberty? There were some who were of opinion that Leo X. would do this, and who even ventured on counselling him to take such a course. But these advisers could hardly have sufficiently remembered that the magnificent Lorenzo could not bring himself to do this as he lay a-dying, even when Savonarola stood by his bedside to urge him to it, and when the absolution, which was to enable his soul to face the eternal judgment-seat with some spark of hope, was the price of his compliance. He *could* not do it. And was it to be expected that Leo, in the prime of life and in tolerable health, would think of such a thing?—Leo, every inch a Medici, and a Pope too, who of course could know no spiritual terrors.

No, no! The Holy Father had no notion of giving up the Medicean game yet, despite the heavy misfortunes which had fallen on the family. There were always the two lads, Ippolito and Alessandro,—Medici, clearly Medici, and the first of these at least a fair and hopeful specimen of the race. Illegitimate? What is there in a word? The quality which the blessing of the poorest priest in Christendom could have conferred on them before their birth, could surely be conferred a little tardily by the fiat of God's vicegerent. No, Leo was not prepared to throw up the cards yet.*

The Cardinal de' Medici, his able coadjutor, was despatched in all haste to Florence, and reached the city

* See the opinion of the historian, Jacopo Pitti; and the plans for the government of Florence, especially one by Macchiavelli, sent to the Holy Father at his request.

while Lorenzo was yet alive, though evidently dying. A.D. 1519.
The Cardinal does not appear to have seen his dying cousin upon this occasion. He had been there very recently, having come to the city for the purpose of visiting Lorenzo on his bed of sickness, but had returned to Rome much discontented, we are told,* with his reception. Lorenzo had for some time past,—almost immediately after his return from France,—shut himself up in his chamber, admitting nobody save his physicians, his intimate friend and companion Filippo Strozzi, who had accompanied him on the expedition to France, and a certain Antonio Nobili, a low boon-companion, who amused him with his buffooneries. It is probable that the Cardinal de' Medici wished to speak to the dying head of his house on other subjects and in a different tone from that adopted by these young men, and that Lorenzo resented the interference of one into whose hands was about to pass the power that was fast slipping from his own, and whose talk would necessarily have reference to the coming event, the prospect of which he was still anxious to exclude from his mind. Possibly also, as some of the historians suggest, the loathsome nature of the malady of which Lorenzo was dying, made the Cardinal not unwilling to cut short his interview as much as might be with the man whose management of life, and of the high destinies and fortunes entrusted to him, had been such as to render him worthless for the great objects for which his elders lived. Assuredly the spectacle of that death-bed, and of the city governed entirely by a worthless sycophant of Lorenzo, one Goro da Pistoia, whom he called his secretary, and to whom the whole management of the government had been entrusted by him when he became too ill to leave his chamber, could not have been a pleasant one to the active,

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Conf. 1309.

A.D. 1519. able, and shrewd Cardinal, who well knew all the importance of acting so as to reconcile the city, as far as might be, to the Medicean yoke.

And this state of feeling between him and Lorenzo will account for the fact that the Cardinal made no attempt to see him on arriving in Florence a day or two before he died. He did not even go near the Medicean palace in the Via Larga; but, alighting at St. Mark's, took up his quarters at the *casino* which stands at the corner of the Piazza and the Via St. Apollonia, and which at this moment is being turned into the seat of one of the ministries of the new Italian kingdom. And there the Cardinal remained till all was over, and Lorenzo had been carried to the family vault in the neighbouring church of St. Lorenzo. Then he moved into the Medicean palace, and received there the homage and condolences of the citizens.

The Cardinal Giulio, afterwards Pope Clement VII., the natural and posthumous son of that Giuliano, the younger brother of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who was killed by the Pazzi in 1478, at the time of the conspiracy intended to take the lives of both the brothers, was a very different man from either the Pope Leo X., or Lorenzo, the Duke of Urbino. He was probably a worse man, certainly a less brilliant man than his more celebrated cousin. But though less fortunate in his management of the political affairs of his time, he was an abler, more active, and more industrious man of business than Leo. His private vices were not less, or less revoltingly disgraceful, than those of the splendid patron of literature, philosophy, and art, his cousin; but they were pursued with greater regard for external decency. There were severe eyes in un-Italian and un-Pagan heads looking menacingly, from beyond the Alps, Romewards, and taking dangerous note of the doings there, which strongly counselled thus much at least of

caution. To these distant watchers Clement VII. seemed in his private life to be, as the times and as Popes went, a decent Pope. And were it not for the unblushing babbling of Italian contemporary, or nearly contemporary, writers, unconscious apparently of the monstrous enormity of the foul facts they so simply and impassively reveal, might be still supposed by posterity to have been so. But the spiritual nature of Clement was deformed by vices from which Leo was, if not free, yet stained by them in a less degree. He was less revengeful, less cruel, less implacable than Clement. He was far less profound a hypocrite, and less inclined by nature to fraud and double-dealing. He had less of the dark remorseless nature of an unscrupulously ambitious politician, and more of the less hateful character of a jovial, self-indulgent, easy epicurean. Lorenzo, the Duke of Urbino, was far inferior in natural gifts to either of them. There was little of the Medicean nature in him. He was, as his father had been before him, an Orsini;—doubly so by inheritance from his grandmother as well as his mother, both princesses of that ruffian baron race. He had all those especially "uncivil" and "uncivic" faults of character which rendered him and his father more particularly distasteful to the Florentines than any other of the Medici. The gentle Florentine nature was "bastardized in their veins," as Guicciardini complains, by this crossing with a less civilized stock. Lorenzo, like his father, was devoid of the talent which had been for so many generations hereditary in the Medicean race; and his manners as well as his disposition were marked by a haughty and insolent brutality, especially intolerable to the eminently courteous nature of the Florentines. For the rest, he may be deemed to be better or worse than the two priests his elders in the family, as it shall seem to the estimater, that a stupid and low-natured profligate is more or less pardonable than an

A.D. 1519.

A.D. 1519. equally demoralized debauchee endowed with very considerable powers of intelligence.

Lorenzo had done much during the short time he had held power in Florence to disgust the city with the Medicean name and rule. This mischief it was now the Cardinal's first and most pressing business to repair; and he lost no time in applying himself to the task. The election of officers, magistrates, and functionaries of all sorts, which had been arbitrarily seized into his own hands by Lorenzo, was restored to the old constitutional practice.* Those more especially called around the Cardinal's own person were among the most worthy and respected citizens, and formed a striking contrast to the worthless set of debauchees and buffoons to whom alone the late Duke had been accessible. Even Nardi, that sincere, consistent, and thorough-going republican, admits that Florence was at this period ruled by the Cardinal de' Medici in a manner that exceeded the utmost expectation of those who thought highest of him, and completely changed the opinion of many who had expected from him a very different line of conduct. The republican historian, however, winds up his praise with a phrase, which well shows how things stood in Florence, and what was the amount of good government, for which the citizens were so thankful.† "It was the universal opinion," he says, "that never since the city had been under the rule of the Medici, had it been governed *with greater appearance* of civil liberty and *more skilful concealment of despotism.*" ‡

The Cardinal, thus become by the force of circumstances the guardian of his infant relative, Catherine, and of the unstable fabric of the family greatness, was born in 1478,

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1311; Cambi, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxii. p. 152.

† Girlhood of Cath. de' Medici by the present writer, p. 14.

‡ Nardi, ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 73.

and was now therefore forty-one years of age. And in truth the multiplicity of active and laborious business he had on his hands, joined to no small weight of anxious care, was sufficient to require all the energies of a man in the prime of life. Among the numerous faults of the Cardinal de' Medici self-indulgent idleness had no place. For the success of those aims in life which appeared to his comprehension the most important and most valuable, he was willing to labour, and did labour patiently, unscrupulously, indefatigably. The weightier portion of the burthen of the Papacy in those times becoming more and more onerous from day to day, and the task of dexterously steering the bark of the papal policy among the shoals and quicksands which lay thick and ever thicker around its devious course, were left by the easy epicureanism of his cousin Leo to fall in a great measure on his shoulders. And now the very difficult duty of recovering the ground lost to Medicean interests in Florence by the late Duke's imprudent conduct was added to his load of cares and labours. The task of ruling that very ungovernable community in such a manner as to quiet, or at least disarm, the vigilant suspicions of the republican party, without ever losing sight of the grand object of reducing it ultimately to the condition of a despotic monarchy, demanded in truth no ordinary share of dexterity and state-craft. A.D. 1519.

Having provided for this to the best of his power, and having succeeded while doing so in winning golden opinions from all sorts of men among the citizens, the Cardinal left Florence in October, after five months' sojourn there, for Rome.

It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that the return to the constitutional practice of election of the magistrates and other officers of the Republic, thus effected by the Cardinal, implied any real abandonment of substantial power on his part, or restoration of it to the citizens.

A.D. 1519. The veil behind which despotic power was hidden, as Nardi says, was a very thin and transparent one. The old forms of electing officials, who when elected could do nothing save in implicit obedience to the will of a higher power, recognised and avowed in all save in name,—these forms, which so amused the electing citizens, and so gratified the vanity of those who were elected by them, and for a restoration of which the city was so grateful, were in reality so mere a nullity, as far as any political power was concerned, that the abolition of them by Lorenzo was rather wantonly offensive as an insult than grievous in any other point of view. Had it been otherwise, had there been any real meaning in the offices to which the people were permitted to elect one another, it would not have been necessary for the Cardinal to appoint, before he quitted the city, some one to be at the head of the government during his absence. But the Cardinal de' Medici never dreamed of leaving Florence to herself;—never imagined for an instant that the various constitutional magistrates thus constitutionally appointed were in reality to rule the city. It was absolutely necessary to name some one to be his lieutenant, his *alter ego*, to do the real business of governing the governors of the city in his absence;—"to be the head of the government!" Head of the government? Under what title? Was not the duly elected Gonfaloniere the head of the government? So Florence professed to consider him. But there was not a street-sweeper in Florence who did not know better than that by this time. Of course there must be a representative of "the family";—of the Medicean interests. And to this responsible situation the Cardinal, before leaving Florence, appointed his brother of the Sacred College, the Cardinal Silvio Passerini,* of Cortona, who had been recently raised to the purple by Leo X.

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1313.

The task entrusted to the Cardinal of Cortona was by no means an easy one. If it was difficult for a tyrant of the race of the Medici to maintain himself in possession of that unavowed, unauthorized, unnamed authority, it was yet more difficult for the tyrant's lieutenant to do so. And Silvio Passerini was not the man for the place. A timid, time-serving, trimming man, very much afraid of the task assigned to him, and of the turbulent restless people he was set to govern, but more afraid of his ecclesiastical masters, and of being judged not to serve them with sufficient zeal, his administration was a series of alternations from irritating tightening of the rein to dangerous relaxation of it. The results of this were seen ere long. But for the present, assisted by the occasional presence of the much-travelling and hard-worked Cardinal, things were kept quiet, and the citizens lived their lives in peace, getting what amusement and excitement they could out of an occasional "Te Deum" and fireworks;—at one time on account of "the taking of the island of Gerbe from the Moors of Tunis;"* and then again in thanksgiving for the death of the Sultan Selim. A.D. 1519.

One of the most immediate consequences of the death of Lorenzo, the so-called Duke of Urbino, was the annexation of that Duchy by Leo to the territory of the Church, with the exception of the fortress of St. Leo and the district of Montefeltro, which he gave to the Florentines as a reimbursement of the sums they had contributed to the war against Francesco Maria della Rovere. Leo would have preferred endeavouring to preserve the Duchy for the infant Catherine, as heiress of Lorenzo. But he judged that, looking to the long period of Catherine's minority which must elapse before any permanent settlement of the matter could be effected, and to the affection of the inha-

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1317.

A.D. 1519. bitants of the country towards their old Duke, who was ready to seize any favourable opportunity for the recovery of his Duchy, the project was too difficult and dangerous to be worth trying.

Matters of wider importance, moreover, were beginning to engross the entire attention of the Holy Father, and to demand the exercise of all his energies and all his resources.

All had gone very pleasantly, as it will be remembered, between Leo X. and Francis I., at that notable interview between them at Bologna, in 1515. France was not only to be allowed to have and to hold the Duchy of Milan, to the prejudice of Francesco Sforza, the son of the dispossessed Duke Ludovico, but was to be allowed to add to it the territories of Parma and Piacenza. Lorenzo de' Medici was to be permitted to make himself Duke of Urbino, at the expense of Francesco Maria della Rovere; and Francis was to be the great friend and protector of Florence and of the Papacy. But things had been very much changed since that time. The cards had been shuffled anew, and a quite new game had begun. We are assured, indeed, that even at the time of that interview it would have been a great mistake to suppose that the Holy Father had any real intention of adhering to his part of the stipulations made between him and the young French monarch.* There were many points of sympathy between the two men. The gay and pleasure-loving Leo no doubt admired the brilliant, gay, and pleasure-loving Francis; found him an extremely pleasant table-companion, and was well inclined to make their meeting pass as agreeably as might be. But the Pontiff had duties to think of;—duties to Italy, to the Holy Church, and above—far above—all, to Florence, to the Medicean name, and to himself. It was

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Conf. 1324.

not likely, as the above cited historian warns us, that Pope Leo had any real intention of allowing Parma and Piacenza to be finally severed from the dominion of the Church, or of reversing the old traditionary Medicean policy in favour of the house of Sforza, by permitting the French to establish themselves definitively in the Duchy of Milan. And now the time had come when it became necessary to consider very seriously, whether the barque of St. Peter had not sailed far enough on that France-ward tack. A.D. 1519.

The death of the foolish and weak old Emperor Maximilian on the 12th of January, 1519, and the election of Charles V. to the Imperial crown on the 28th of June in the same year, had been events calculated to cause a series of infinite perplexities to God's vicegerent on earth. Two natures more antipathetic than those of Charles V. and Francis I. it is scarcely possible to conceive. But both were equally ambitious of greatness; and both thought that it would be achieved by adding the imperial crown, vacant by the death of Maximilian, to that of their own dominions. And hence arose an additional source of rivalry and hatred between decorous, scheming, selfish Charles, and gay, thoughtless, worthless, and not less selfish Francis.

And how was a poor vicegerent, beset on either side by these masterful northern barbarians, to rule the world—always in the interest of his Master—unless by unstinted use of dexterous double-dealing, and that crafty capacity for tide-watching, with which the Italian sacerdotal intellect has been so largely gifted? To manage Europe altogether according to the interests of religion, and the Divine will, required just then a very laborious dexterity of steering, much more troublesome than anything which the easy going voluptuary Vicar of Christ had anticipated, when, on being raised to that dignity, he exclaimed,

A.D. 1519. "Since God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it!" *

Doubtless there must have been very serious debates in the inmost chambers of the Vatican, before the all-important change in the policy of the Holy See, which Leo was now meditating, was decided on; debates in which His Eminence the Cardinal Giulio must have been the chief, if not the sole, counsellor. May we not well suppose this critical question to have been the subject of discourse between the two Medicean purple priests, at that sitting immortalised by the brush of Raffaelle on the canvas now hanging in "the tribune" at the Uffizi in Florence? There is importunate care on the heavy sensual features of the epicurean Pontiff; and anxious thoughtfulness on the more comely brow of the shrewd, able, crafty-looking Cardinal hanging over him.

There are dangers, great dangers on either side. France is very powerful;—more powerful than when Louis XII. won the battle of Ravenna; and Francis is not the man to feel all the compunction at winning a battle against the papal forces, that Louis was. Yet, on the other hand, that Charles of Ghent! Surely there are all the marks of a rising power to be seen in him. He has notably beaten Francis once already in the matter of the imperial crown. Then, again, this northern Charles has shown symptoms of being well-disposed towards the Apostolic Church,—no small consideration in these days. He has put that pestilent and dangerous friar, Luther, to the ban of the empire. That looks well—excellently well! No danger of hearing of a council from him, eh? Evidently a friend and protector of the Holy Catholic Church! And Francis, or his lieutenants for him, have not lately been show-

* "Quando il papa fu fatto diceva a Giuliano; godiamoci del papato, poiche Dio ci l'ha dato." Orat. Ven. Second Series, vol. iii. p. 54. See also Girlhood of Cath. de' Medici, p. 27.

ing themselves as docile as could be desired to the Apostolic commands in regard to certain matters in Lombardy.* A.D. 1520.

So the important decision was taken, a secret league signed with the new "Cæsar," and it was determined to attack the French power in Lombardy. It was accordingly announced to Florence, that she was to go to war with her recent ally and protector, France, in league with the Imperial forces and the Papal See. The Commonwealth, as we must yet for a little time longer continue to call the Florentine government, by virtue of the still standing shell of the old constitutional edifice,—the Commonwealth had very little to say in the matter beyond paying for the forces which they were required to furnish as their contingent to the army of the new league. The Imperial, the Papal, and the Florentine troops together, amounted to twelve hundred men-at-arms, and fifteen thousand infantry. The latter were rapidly becoming of more comparative importance in the wars of Europe; and the historians no longer disdain to record their numbers. Of this army the veteran Prospero Colonna was named "moderatore," which strange title was invented in order to leave that of general vacant for the Marquis of Mantua; while the Marchese di Pescara was the commander of the Spanish Neapolitan contingent.† And of course the rivalry between these chieftains began very shortly to produce those troubles and dangers, no oft-repeated experience of which seems to have sufficed to teach the Italians to avoid the certain cause of them.

The French army in Lombardy, stronger in men-at-arms, but inferior in infantry, was under the command of the Maréchal de Lautrec.

The first enterprise projected by the league in the spring

* Ammirato, *loc. cit.*

* Ammirato, *loc. cit.*

A.D. 1521. of the year 1521, was an attack on Parma. But Lautrec sent such reinforcements to the garrison there in time, as compelled the army of the league, after a first unimportant appearance of success, to abandon the attempt.

In the meantime Giovanni de' Medici,—Giovanni delle Bande Nere, he who was the posthumous son of that Giovanni, the husband of Caterina Sforza, and the father of Cosmo, subsequently first Grand Duke of Tuscany,—had achieved some successes against the Venetians, and Antonio Pucci, a fighting bishop of Pistoia, had defeated the troops of the Duke of Ferrara, both of which powers were allies of France in the present struggle.

These successes, of secondary importance however, by no means sufficed to console the Pontiff and his friends in Florence for their miscarriage in the first important enterprise of the war before Parma; more especially as rumours of a very disagreeable and dangerous state of feeling between the Marchese di Pescara and Prospero Colonna began to reach Rome and Florence. The Pontiff had had experience in the recent war against Urbino, which made him fully alive to all the danger with which such quarrels were pregnant. And he sent pressing instructions to the Cardinal, who was then at Florence, to take post without the loss of a minute, and hasten to the camp for the purpose of adjusting the differences between the leaders. The indefatigable Cardinal, leaving Florence on the 29th of September,* hurried to the scene of action, and succeeded in so far allaying the jealous feelings, which had been on the point of breaking out into open quarrel, as to render the prosecution of the war possible. And from this time the tide of victory ran steadily in favour of the Pontiff and the league; till, on the 19th of November, 1521, Milan fell into their power. And this signal success was followed by others scarcely less important.

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1326.

The Pope was at his villa of Magliana when the news of the fall of Milan reached him. Of course his triumph and rejoicing were very great. But a slight attack of fever—a mere nothing—induced him that same day to leave Magliana for Rome. In a day or two came the further good news that Piacenza was taken from the French. It was impossible that things should go better; but the Pope was hardly able to enjoy the tidings as much as he would otherwise have done; for that foolish little fever, which the physicians had said was nothing to signify, had grown worse. And when on the 1st of December, a messenger came riding in hot haste, with the glorious news that Parma also had been taken by the papal and imperial forces, he was barely in time to tell them to the Pontiff;—for on that very day in the midst of his triumph the Pope died. A.D. 1521.

The circumstances of Leo's death have been much discussed and questioned by the historians of every age, from his own time to the present. And the general opinion seems to be that the suspicions of poison which were rife at the time were unfounded. There are several circumstances, however, that seem to favour a contrary opinion. In the first place the extreme suddenness of the termination of his illness does not appear to have attracted so much attention from those who have estimated the probabilities of the matter, as is perhaps due to it. He died, as is well known, without the sacraments, for want of time to administer them to him. Such a circumstance was sure not to escape the wits of Rome; and one of them, said to have been Sannazarro, immortalized the fact in the following pungent and unforgotten epigram:—

"Sacra sub extremâ, si forte requiritis horâ
Cur Leo non potuit sumere;—vendiderat."

A.D. 1521. which may be roughly Englished;

> "Why Leo shriftless died, may easily be told;
> He could not have the sacred rites, because they had been sold."

Now when it is remembered that no degree of mental capacity is needed for receiving the Viaticum;—that unless there were some very stringent over-riding motive, the administration of it would by no means have been omitted, had the utmost activity been sufficient to accomplish the short ceremony; and that priests and all necessary appliances must have been at all moments within immediate call in the Pope's palace at Rome; it must be evident, either that up to within a very few minutes of his death, neither Leo nor his attendants could have had any idea that his end was at hand; or that there were very strong reasons for preventing him from being seen in his last moments by any save those in whose hands he was. It is to be observed also, that none of the maladies, to which his death has been attributed, are of a nature to have ended thus suddenly and unexpectedly. It may be worth noting also, that Galeotto de' Medici, the Florentine ambassador at Rome at the time, writes to his government on the 30th of November, the day before the Pope died, anticipating his speedy recovery from his indisposition, which he evidently considered as quite unimportant.*

But very much stranger than all else, and indeed I may say almost conclusive to my mind, in support of the suspicion of poison, is the opinion of the Venetian ambassador, Luigi Gradenigo. In the summary of his report by Marino Sanuto, occurs this remarkable passage. "And suddenly the Pope fell ill. And the ambassador had the Cardinal Trivulzi and Bernardino Speroni the physician,

* Correspondence of Galeotto de' Medici with the "Otto di Practica," in volumes numbered xix.—xxv. in the "Archivio Centrale Toscano."—"Reformazioni." Clas. x. Dist. vi.

our countryman of Padua, to give him information from hour to hour how the Pope was. He died on the first of December, at the eighth hour of the night; (*i.e.* about two o'clock in the morning.) His sister (Lucretia, wife of Jacopo Salviati), who was there, carried off everything from the palace. And our ambassador concluded that this Pope came to a sudden and violent death for having joined the party of the Emperor."* Bernardino Speroni was Leo's physician. And when those who are acquainted with Italian manners recollect the very strong bond of union and intimacy which would exist between the two Venetians in Rome, they will feel tolerably sure, that when the ambassador gave it as his opinion that the Pope came to his end by foul means, he spoke also the opinion of "nostro Padovano," the Pope's physician. If any man in Rome, besides the agents of the deed, were likely to arrive at the truth upon such a subject, it would be the cool, shrewd, watchful Venetian ambassador, whose special business it was to employ his practised sagacity in obtaining sure information on all sorts of subjects, and whose sole object it would be to convey the truth to his government. A.D. 1521.

To all this, it may be added that Bernabô de' Marchesi Malespini, the Pope's cupbearer, who was suspected of having been the agent employed to poison him, was imprisoned; but was shortly released by the politic Cardinal Giulio, *in order to avoid increasing the enmity of the King of France.*†

The sudden death of Leo was a source of immediate trouble and expense to the Florentines, who were beginning to find, that not the least of the evils arising from the intimate connection which bound them to the Papacy, and

"Concludente il nostro oratore, che questo papa per avere aderito all' imperatore precipitò." Relaz. Ven., Second Series, vol. iii. p. 71. The word "precipitò" would accurately mean, "was cast down headlong."

† Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1326; Mecatti, op. cit. ad ann.

A.D. 1522. thus mixed them up with widespreading affairs and intrigues in which they had no interest, was the necessity of taking a part in quarrels which were none of their own. The Duke of Urbino had been dispossessed of his Duchy by the late Pope; and Giovanni Paolo Baglioni, of Perugia, had been decapitated by him. It was a matter of course therefore, that the Duke of Urbino, and the sons of the tyrant of Perugia should seize the opportunity of the Pope's death, and the interregnum, for an endeavour to reinstate themselves in their possessions. They joined together for this purpose. And the Cardinal de' Medici, on whom the task of keeping things as they were in the interest of the Papacy during the interregnum, naturally fell, had no means of doing so, as ready and available as the Florentine power. The Commonwealth had therefore to send forces at the commencement of the year 1522 for the defence of Perugia, and the support of Gentile Baglioni, who had been placed there by the Pope in opposition to his anti-papal relatives. These forces were worsted; and then it became necessary to provide for the defence of Siena, which the Duke of Urbino and the Baglioni threatened. And the doing so entailed a heavy expense on the citizens.

On the 9th of January a new Pope was elected, Adrian Boyers of Utrecht, who had been tutor to Charles V. He took the title of Adrian VI., and has been the last non-Italian Pope elected from that time to the present day. The transplantation of this poor well-meaning Dutchman to Rome, was very soon discovered by all parties concerned to have been a great mistake. The poor man, who had thus had greatness thrust upon him in his absence, (for he had taken no part in the conclave that elected him) had with his northern idiosyncrasies certain more or less Christian propensities and notions wholly incompatible with the southern atmosphere of splendid Pagan Rome. Though there had been very much worse men in the seat

of St. Peter than Leo X., Rome had probably never been since the time of Constantine so thoroughly, so consciously, so audaciously Pagan as in his days. And suddenly comes to be sovereign of this brilliant, spendthrift, corrupt city this northern barbarian with his uncouth scholastic Latin, his ideas of Apostolical purity and simplicity, and his "one ducat a day for his expenses taken with his own hand from his own pocket, and delivered to his private butler, with 'Buy for to-morrow's needs with this!'* His food consists of a morsel of veal, or beef, or fowl; sometimes he has soup of some common kind; and on the vigils, fish; but of all he eats sparingly. A woman, whom he brought with him from his own country, cooks for him, and makes his bed, and does his washing." A.D. 1522.

Another Venetian ambassador, Marco Foscari, in a letter to Cardinal Fresco, writes thus of poor Adrian, whom all the Italians seem to look at and speak of, as he were some strange and incomprehensible phenomenon. "The man is tenacious of his own," says Foscari, "very thrifty in giving, and rarely or never receiving. At mass he is daily and early. Whether he has any favourite, and who it may be, nobody has yet found out. He can be neither driven by anger, or led by joking. Nor was it observed that he showed any exultation at his elevation. On the contrary, it is known that on hearing the news of it he gave a groan."

This was not the man to do battle with the gorgeous corruption of the Roman Court. Nevertheless, Adrian did enough in his short papacy of little more than twenty months to earn the contempt and hatred of all who surrounded him. Poetasters, buffoons, and singers were swept out from their haunts in the Apostolic palace. Classical bishops, whose Ciceronian style was too pure to

* Relaz. Ven., Second Series, vol. iii. p. 113.

A.D. 1522. be injured by reading the barbarisms of St. Paul in the vulgate, were sent scampering to their distant bishoprics.* The Roman Academicians were put to general rout. Suppers on Tiber's banks by moonlight, convivial interchange of festive jocularities under the shade of suburban gardens, and liberal patronage of literature with cash raised at forty per cent, were all at an end. Hundreds of crowns were no longer to be had for a song, a poem, or a jest. Rome was shaken with alarm and immeasurable disgust. The new Pope's conduct was inexplicable on any known theory of human nature. Even what he might have given without cost to himself, either bishopric, abbey, or office, the stupid ultramontane barbarian would not *give* away like a splendid and munificent prince;—would not even *sell* like a prudent and thrifty one; but insisted on making unheard of inquiries into the moral fitness of the applicant; in this and a hundred other ways disturbing the old traditions and habits, and causing infinite perplexity, trouble, and loss of profit by his strange northern-grown notions of duty.

Duty! Poor Adrian had to arrive gradually, during the course of his short but heart-sickening pontificate, at the conviction that his position was one with which no performance of duty in any shape was compatible. With a beggared treasury depending for its principal supplies on sources altogether infamous and suicidal; with Europe

* Cardinal Bembo wrote to Sadoleto, Bishop of Carpentras, advising him not to read Paul's Epistles for fear of injuring his style, adding, that such follies—"ineptiæ"—were not fit studies for a serious man. The prevalence of similar feeling is curiously indicated by a passage from a letter, written by Nicolas Hankins, Archdeacon of Ely, to Henry VIII., by whom he had been sent as his ambassador to Charles V., at the conference at Bologna, in 1532. The Archdeacon speaks of "these Italians, whiche I cnowe to be so curiose and delicate, that if the writing plaise them not, thei abject it, be the thing never so good; insomuche that for this cause wonli, veri mani of them fastide the studi of Scripture." State Papers of Henry VIII., vol. vii. p. 404.

torn from end to end by quarrels of kings and quarrels of creeds, all of which the theory of his office required him to interfere in and compose; with nothing but contempt and aversion in those around him; and with none to help, and none to be trusted, unless it were the old Louvain housekeeper, who still, as in happier days, made his bed and cooked his frugal meal,—what could a poor Flemish professor make of the scarlet-robed heathen Babylon he was called to govern, although he laboured hard at midnight matins and early masses, and lived on a dollar a day?* A.D. 1522.

The anomalous presence of such a sovereign in the Roman court gave trouble enough in Rome after his arrival there; but the first trouble arising from his election was due to his absence. Things had to be maintained provisionally *in statu quo* as far as was possible. And as this could not be done save by force of arms, and the Cardinal Giulio was, from the prominence of his position and his connection with the late Pope, the person on whom the task of conducting the affairs of the Roman Court mainly fell, the onus of providing the necessary force fell chiefly on the Florentines. Giovanni delle Bande Nere was recalled with his troops from Lombardy and dispatched to the defence of Siena, threatened by the Duke of Urbino. Having compelled the Duke to retire from that city, he advanced towards Perugia for the purpose of wresting it from the sons of Paolo Baglioni, who had on the Pope's death recovered possession of it. But the Sacred College, fearing apparently that, inasmuch as the Florentine interests and those of the Church were not any longer to be so entirely commingled as they had been during the late pontificate, the troops under Giovanni

* See, for a fuller account of the Pontificate of Adrian, the 3rd chapter of "The Girlhood of Catherine de' Medici," by the present writer, from which the description in the text has been in great part taken.

A.D. 1522. delle Bande Nere might possibly be thinking more of Florence than of the Church in their operations against Perugia, ordered Giovanni to leave the ecclesiastical territory, and allow matters to remain as they were till the arrival of the new Pontiff.

It was not till the 23d of August of that year, 1522, that Adrian passed by Leghorn on his way to assume the tiara at Rome. And before that the indefatigable Cardinal Giulio, the greater part of whose life seems about this time to have been passed on the high-road, had to provide against a new danger at Florence, which had arisen out of the recent change in the late Pope's politics from French to Imperial. It will be remembered that Soderini, the Gonfaloniere for life, who had been obliged to quit Florence on the restoration of the Medici in 1512, had a brother, the Cardinal of Volterra, who appears to have been a more active or at least more restless man than his brother. The ex-Gonfaloniere, having first retired to Ragusa, and at a later period accepted the invitation of Leo X. to establish himself at Rome, seems to have acquiesced in the position which the revolving wheel of political fortune had made for him. Not so, however, his brother the Cardinal Bishop. His Eminence had never forgiven the ruin which the return of the Medici had caused to fall on his brother and their family; and it seemed to him that in the recent change in the policy of the late Pope might be found the means of reversing all that had been done in Florence since 1512, restoring his family to their position in the Commonwealth, and visiting their enemies, the Medici, with a very ample measure of retribution.

Negotiation with the French king, to whom the Medici were now no less hateful than to himself, easily obtained the sanction and assistance of Francis for a scheme for the subversion of the Medicean government in Florence. French money and French troops were furnished, and the conduct of the

proposed enterprise was entrusted to a soldier of fortune of the Orsini family who did not share the Medicean sympathies of his family, one Lorenzo, known in the pages of the contemporary historians as Renzo da Ceri. But the ubiquitous vigilance of the Cardinal Giulio was not to be caught at fault. He obtained timely information of the projects on foot; and the first and immediate measure he took for meeting the danger was to become reconciled to the Duke of Urbino, with whom Florence was at feud on account of that Montefeltro district of his Duchy, which had been assigned to Florence when the remainder of his dominions had been united to those of the Holy See. Montefeltro sank into very second-rate importance in face of the present danger; and it was arranged that the Duke was to remain in unmolested possession of it on condition of using all his power against Renzo da Ceri. A.D. 1522.

It was further agreed that the Duke was to be engaged by the Commonwealth as her Captain-general for the space of one year, and that the Conte Guido Rangoni, an able *condottiere* captain, should be made "Governor-general."

Here was once again the old dangerous policy of multiplying commanders, whose attributions and rank were sure to clash and cause fatal jealousies, invent as they might new titles in the vain hope of satisfying them all, and the engagement of whom was dictated not by any real necessity for their services, but in reality by that of offering them a bribe not to join the other side. In the present case the appointments above mentioned gave mortal offence to a man who was at least the equal to either of those captains in military capacity, but who, as the Cardinal perhaps thought, might have been expected to feel himself bound to the Medicean cause by ties too strong to be broken by mere professional jealousy. This was Giovanni de' Medici delle Bande Nere. But the truth was that there never had been, nor to the end ever was, any great

A.D. 1522. cordiality of feeling between the Medici of the elder branch, the descendants of Cosmo "Pater Patrice," and those of the younger, sprung from Lorenzo his brother. In the present case Giovanni delle Bande Nere at once marched off in dudgeon, and placed the services of himself and his famous band at the disposal of the French king.*

Nevertheless the Conte Guido Rangoni showed himself so much superior in strategy or in fortune to Renzo da Ceri, who had acquired a high reputation in the service of the Venetians during the late wars in Lombardy, that in all the desultory warfare in the southern districts of Tuscany, which resulted from this attempt of the Cardinal Soderini, Renzo and his French allies could effect nothing. The Florentine territory was efficiently defended at all points; and when at last Rangoni was about to carry the war into the district in which the Orsini dominions† were situated, — the northern part of the Roman Maremma, that is to say,—the Sacred College, fearing that their own territory would become involved in warlike operations, which were coming thus close to them, ordered that the war should cease, and either party remain *in statu quo* till the arrival of the new Pontiff. These events took place in the months of March and April, 1522; and when the new Gonfaloniere, Roberto Pucci,‡ came into office at the beginning of April, it seemed as if Florence might hope to enjoy at least a brief period of tranquillity and respite from a state of warfare, though not from the pecuniary results of the far-stretching policy of her rulers. For the consequence of

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1328; Mecatti, ad ann.

† The "dominions" of Lorenzo Orsini were of dimensions, which, in modern parlance, would be called rather "estates" than "states;" but they were held as independent imperial fiefs.

‡ The brother of a Cardinal, and himself afterwards raised by Clement to the purple;—a suggestive indication of what the Gonfaloniereship had become under the government of the Medicean priests.

the victories won by the Imperial forces over the French in Lombardy, was the restoration of Francesco Sforza, the hereditary protégé of the Medici, to his Duchy of Milan. The consequence of this restoration was an immediate necessity for money to enable him to take possession of his dominions. And where was this to be found save in the still comparatively well-furnished pockets of the Florentines? So the Cardinal *lent* Francesco nine thousand crowns, as well as the artillery of the Commonwealth, for the purpose of recovering possession of Genoa; and a special arbitrary tax of thirty thousand crowns "for this and other purposes," had to be laid on the city "payable before the end of May."* A.D. 1522.

It cannot be denied, that there was one point of view, and one side of the Florentine character, which rendered the despotism that had gradually settled down upon the Commonwealth, less intolerable at this stage of its history than its loud-tongue Republicanism and professed love of liberty might have prepared us to suppose. It was that same plague-spot in the innate idiosyncrasy of the race, which had marred the development of their civilization, and caused the waste of so much national energy and force;—that same worm in the bud, which had from the beginning doomed the Florentine civilization to an early death. It was the fatal mistake between liberty and equality;—the mistake of dressing up the low and wholly ignoble sentiment of envious jealousy in the noble garb of patriotic love of liberty. Let me not see my neighbour, my rival, my equal placed in any semblance of superiority over me! This was the really ruling sentiment of the Florentine citizen;—this the one thing that was intolerable to him. Those have read this story amiss, who have not seen in it abundant proof, that such was the

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1328.

A.D. 1522. truth. It has been seen, that there were times when it was avowedly imprudent to permit the possession even of large wealth to be openly manifested. The modesty of demeanour, which was so favourite and popular a virtue in those who held any prominent position in the social body, was but a plea for the pardon of the citizens for such pre-eminence,—a continual deprecation of the ill-will, which it was instinctively felt that such superiority was calculated to engender. The Florentines were indeed passionate lovers of equality; and were at any time ready to sacrifice liberty to their passion. Let us be all slaves alike, if we cannot be all kings alike; only let our tyrant be not one of ourselves! This was the genuine and persistent key-note of Florentine political and social sentiment. And the present domination of the Medici was not wholly unacceptable to the Florentines, because it had come to satisfy in a great degree the requirements of this feeling.

When the Medicean domination was rising and consolidating itself under the first Cosmo, Pietro and Lorenzo, it was far more offensive to the citizens. These Medici were then citizens themselves, not too far removed in greatness and ascendancy to be felt to be the rivals of many another family. The olden time when they had run a neck-and-neck race with the Albizzi and others was still fresh in the minds of everybody. The agony of seeing a successful rival, who had yesterday been but one of themselves, rise into power and dominion, was present and felt in every fibre, and at every moment. Now the Medici had ceased to be Florentine citizens, even as the rest were. They had too long evidently and avowedly been something different from this. The late great promotion of the family in a line, which essentially and effectually separated them from their fellow-citizens, and from any concurrence with other ambitions, had very powerfully contributed to this. A Pope was necessarily placed far above all rivalry. These

ecclesiastical princes of the Medicean race no longer presented themselves to the Florentine imagination as citizens, members of their own body, or as in any way open to rivalry and competition. All the great Florentine families with their mutual hatreds and jealousies were held down with an impartiality of repression, which went far towards reconciling them to the yoke. And the wider stratum of the social body, which was next beneath these, was not ill-pleased to see that those who were situated above them in the social pyramid, were subjected to the same tyranny with themselves. A.D. 1522.

It is true that the old faction feelings and party cries of the Medicean adherents and their anti-Medicean enemies were by no means yet obsolete in Florence; but they were tending towards extinction. And the wisdom of the Cardinal Giulio, now shortly to become Clement VII., contributed powerfully to the extinction of them. He knew no difference between the citizens save that between submissive and recalcitrant subjects. He was no more disposed to tolerate or excuse resistance to his will from the hereditary supporters of his family, than he was to remember the old-world hostility of such as were now inclined to submit to it. The members of the old Medicean party found him a lukewarm partisan, while to those of the party opposed to them, if they were guilty of no other offence, he was a very placable enemy. Very wise also in this point of view was his choice of the *alter ego*, whom he was compelled by his necessary absence from Florence to leave as ruler in his place. The Cardinal of Cortona was in no sense one of themselves to the Florentine citizens. His dignity was of a nature which removed it out of the sphere of civic jealousies; and his origin was equally calculated to make his possession of power inoffensive to the Florentines. The Cardinal Silvio Passerini, was not a well-chosen instrument in other

A.D. 1522. respects. He had neither the tact, the firmness, nor the courage that were needed in the emergencies with which he was destined to have to deal. But he was well adapted for the important purpose that has been pointed out.

Notwithstanding this situation and tendency of the public mind in Florence, there were still some men in the city to whom the despotism of the Medicean rule was sufficiently detestable to induce them to risk their lives for the destruction of it. But the change in the temper of the times is seen in the small and restricted nature of the attempts in question. We have seen one such sufficiently extinguished by the execution of two not very distinguished young men. It is no longer the movement of a large party,—no longer insurrection, but conspiracy, that the rulers have to fear.

It was while the French were still in possession of a portion of the Duchy of Milan, before they had been entirely driven out of it by the forces of Charles V., that a French courier was one day arrested in Florence;—a sufficiently suspicious and disquieting circumstance, it must be admitted, when the relations then existing between the Medici and Francis I., and the recently defeated attempt of the latter are taken into consideration. The Cardinal Giulio happened to be in Florence at the time; and though nothing of a criminatory nature had been found on him, the man was condemned to death, and told to use the few hours which remained to him in making his peace with heaven;—for which purpose a confessor should be sent to him. The Cardinal still believed that the man must have letters, which would in all probability furnish evidence against some of the most dangerous men in Florence. And he would therefore have given much to know what the condemned man might say in his last confession. But the seal of confession is sacred; and it was not for so respectable a churchman as the Cardinal to be guilty of

the sacrilege of breaking it. So a police spy, dressed to represent a friar, was sent to the poor man, and forcibly pointed out to him that the only hope of saving his soul lay in the most complete and detailed avowal. He was thus induced to confess, that there was a letter sewn into a certain part of the lining of his cloak; and the important secret was at once carried to the Cardinal. A.D. 1522.

Nothing more was ever heard or seen of the unfortunate courier; but on that same evening Messer Jacopo Diaceto was arrested. This young man was one of a knot of friends, who used to meet and talk in the gardens * of the Rucellai family on all the topics with which a despotic government least loves its subjects to occupy themselves. There were young men of the Alamanni, Rucellai, Diaceti, and Buondelmonti families among them. Machiavelli might not unfrequently have been seen there; and the Medicean government knew well, that the set which frequented the Rucellai gardens comprised all that was most hostile to despotic rule in Florence. The infamous stratagem therefore, which, by abusing the confessional as a means of betraying a penitent, put Jacopo Diaceto in the Cardinal's power, was an important success.

One of the little band of friends, Antonio Brucioli, instantly on hearing of the arrest of Diaceto, took horse, was just in time to get out of Florence before the closing of the gates at nightfall, and rode hard to warn Luigi Alamanni, a prominent member of the little society, and a poet of some fame, of the danger. He was at a villa near Figline, some twenty miles from Florence; and had thus an opportunity of getting across the Apennine into the states of the Duke of Urbino. Another Luigi Alamanni, the poet's cousin, less fortunate than he, was in garrison at Arezzo, and was there arrested and brought to Florence.

* These gardens still exist, and are known as the "Orti Oricellai."

A.D. 1522. Zanobi Buondelmonti, another of the set, hurried home on the first news of the arrest of his friend, with the intention of concealing himself "in one of those secret hiding places, which are usually contrived for such occasions, in large houses," writes the historian Jacopo Nardi, who gives a detailed account of this affair. But Buondelmonti's wife, a woman of great judgment and presence of mind, "more worthy of a man than a woman," says Nardi, drove him out of the house "almost by force," put into his hand all the money she could on the spur of the moment get together, and bade him lose not an hour in putting himself beyond the frontier. Leaving the city by the Porta Pinti, he met the cortége of the Cardinal coming in from his evening drive; and had hardly time to escape his eye, by throwing himself hastily into the shop of a sculptor close by the gate. He started on foot, as soon as ever the enemy had passed, reached the frontier safely, and found an asylum in the house of the *Podestà* of Castelnuovo in the territory of Ferrara, one Ludovico Ariosto, who had been wont, whenever he came to Florence, to be the guest of Buondelmonti.

It was well for those who thus put themselves out of the power of the tyrant. For to the surprise and disgust of all the party, Luigi Diaceto, at the first turn of the rack, confessed everything; admitted that the conspirators had intended to assassinate the Cardinal, and answered whatever further questions were put to him.

"We were told," says Nardi, "that he confessed that he was influenced by revenge for having been refused a vacant place, for which he had applied. We were told also," adds the historian, "that at the point of death, he begged his confessor, in the hearing of 'the black brethren,' who in conformity with their vows were attending him during his last hours, to inform the magistrates, that he had been driven by the stress of torment to inculpate

wrongfully Tommaso Soderini; and that when this confession thus attested had been laid before the Cardinal's Secretary, it was replied, 'We want no other confession from him, but that which we have already.'" But the cautious and conscientious historian gives both reports merely as such, adding as to the latter, that "it is almost too atrocious to be believed." * A.D. 1522.

Of course the two unfortunate youths who had fallen into the clutches of the Medici were beheaded on that same block in the centre of the old Bargello court which had so recently been stained by the blood of other victims to the cause of "order;" and the Cardinal flattered himself that the Medicean power was proportionably the more durably established in Florence.

This execution took place on the 7th of June, 1522. It may be mentioned also with regard to this conspiracy, and as a proof that it was, as has been stated, an isolated enterprise, not shared in by any large party in the city, that according to the testimony of Ammirato, the general opinion of the anti-Medicean party was, that if the conspirators had succeeded in killing the Cardinal, the city would assuredly have been attacked and sacked by the Imperial forces, which had just then so served Genoa, and which, eager for prey and booty as they were, would not have allowed so fair an opportunity as the avenging of his death to escape them.†

* Nardi, Istorie di Firenze, lib. vii. vol. ii. p. 87, ed. 1842. See also "The Life of Filippo Strozzi," by the present writer, from which this account of the Diaceto conspiracy has been mainly taken.

† Ammirato, lib. xxix. Gonf. 1329.

CHAPTER III.

Causes of the troubles that devastated Italy—Fresh French army crosses the Alps in 1523—Italian league against them—Pestilence in Florence—Death of Pope Adrian — Election of the Cardinal de' Medici as Clement VII.—His capacity for the office—Prospects of the Papacy—Position of Italy disputed over by Charles V. and Francis I.—Policy of Italian rulers—Clement enters into a league with Francis—Breaks it, and returns to alliance with Charles—Conspires against Charles, and attempts to suborn the Marquis of Pescara—Clement returns again to alliance with Francis—Absolves Francis from his oath to Charles V.—Italian league against Charles V.—Hopes of the Italians—Clement sends the Medicean young men to Florence—Diet of Spires—Enmity of Charles towards Clement—The Viceroy of Naples and the Colonnas march against the Pope—Sack the Vatican—Clement in the Castle of St. Angelo—Makes a treaty with the Viceroy—Gives up Strozzi as a hostage for the performance of it—General hatred against Clement—He breaks his treaty with the Viceroy—Massacre of the Colonnas—Danger of Filippo Strozzi—His scheme for escaping—Discontent at Florence—Inefficiency of the Cardinal of Cortona—A fresh treaty between the Pope and the Viceroy saves Strozzi—Doubtful how far the Emperor accepted the treaty made by the Viceroy—The Emperor sends Bourbon and Frundsburg against Rome — Undisciplined march of their army — The Constable Bourbon—His social position—Defenceless condition of Rome—Efforts of the Viceroy to avert the dangers from Rome—His ill-success—Arrival of the Constable's army before Rome—Sack of the city.

The claims of the house of Anjou to the throne of Naples, based on the last wills of two worthless women,* and that of the house of Orleans to the throne of Milan, based on the doubtful right of an heiress of the family of Sforza,† had not yet ceased to be the immediate and formal causes of that series of evils which for so many generations

* Giovanna I. and Giovanna II., Queens of Naples.

† Valentine, married to Charles Duke of Orleans.

deluged Italy with blood, and made her soil the fighting-ground for the armies of Europe. It is true, of course, that these small circumstances were but the formal causes, or the occasion rather for all the woes that seem to have arisen from them. Of course, the real cause of the mischief was the mass of ignorance, cupidity, stupidity, and evil passions, which set men's hands at each other's throats, which made the nations tools in the hands of greedy and ignorant kings, and degraded the suffering multitude into passive and unresisting victims. Of course, the real cause of all that mismanagement of the world was the ignorance and stupidity which prevented the world from knowing better. Of course, if there had been no Queens Giovanna of Naples, and no legitimate Valentine, and illegitimate Bianca at Milan, the nations would have cut each other's throats for some other ground of dispute. Still, looking at those formal causes which fall more immediately within the historian's ken, we may say that it was to the great misfortune of mankind that, mainly by the sagacious fraud of Louis XI., these claims to Italian sovereignty were now centred in the King of France. And the present monarch, Francis I., fired by kingly ambition, and the noble love of that glory which may be purchased by sufferings he did not share, and prowess not his own, was not the man to accept the defeats he had already sustained on Italian soil, as a final settlement of his pretensions. A.D. 1523.

In the summer of 1523, a fresh French army swarmed across the Alps for the recovery of Milan, and a new Italian league composed of the Pope, the Emperor, the King of England, Ferdinand Archduke of Austria, the Duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza, the Florentines, and the Genoese, was published in the month of June of that year for the defence of Italy against the French invaders.

The main part which Florence had to play in the matter was that to which she was so well accustomed,—to pay.

A.D. 1523. They were bidden to furnish two hundred men-at-arms—hirelings of course; and twenty thousand crowns a month towards the expenses of the war.*

But the prevailing ignorance of a great many things, the right understanding of which is necessary to the judicious management of the world around us and of our life in it, was producing at this time yet worse results than war and its calamities in the streets and dwellings of Florence. Pope Adrian, when at length he reached Rome, at the end of August, 1522, found the city desolated by pestilence; and now, by the end of the year, that dread visitation had reached Florence in all its force.†

Evidently in the air! said the physicians. Clearly a judgment of God on our sins! said the theologians. Yes, truly! a judgment of God on the sins of those whose city was so visited. But the misfortune was, that they did not understand which of their sins the pestilence was the proper punishment of. If only we could pair off our judgments and our sins with some approach to appropriate correctness, we should be nearer to profitable wisdom in the matter.

In Florence the remainder of the year was troubled only by the pestilence, which nearly emptied the city, either by death or by driving all those who could by any possibility leave it to the villas and neighbouring towns. But in Lombardy the war was in the meantime once again renewed; and at first with an apparent change of fortune. For the new French army, which poured over the Alps under the Admiral Bonivet in August of that year, rapidly made itself master of all the country to the westward of the Ticino, and having crossed it, despite the efforts of the imperialist forces under Prospero Colonna to prevent them, was advancing towards Milan; when a new change in the

* Ammirato, lib. xxix. Conf. 1336; Mecatti, ad ann.

† Ammirato, lib. xxix. Conf. 1334.

position of matters in the peninsula was brought about by the death of Pope Adrian on the 23rd of September, 1523. A.D. 1523.

On the 19th of November, after nearly two months of disputing, intriguing, and negotiating, the Conclave announced that they had been inspired by the Holy Ghost to elect the Cardinal de' Medici Pope. His principal opponent had been that Cardinal Soderini, the brother of the late Gonfaloniere for life, who had never forgotten his bitter indignation against the Medici for having caused the downfall of his family in Florence, nor ceased his restless endeavours so to shape the policy of the great powers of Europe, as to make it subservient to the ruin of the Medicean fortunes. Of course he was supported in the Conclave by all the influence of the French party and the French king, with whom we have seen him so lately conspiring to bring about revolution in Tuscany. He was beaten, however, by the stronger combination of the Imperial with the Medicean interest; and the Italian world hailed the election of the Cardinal de' Medici as the best and wisest that could have been made under the circumstances of the case.

If long practice of affairs, and much sagacity of that sort which partakes more of cunning than of any higher or larger wisdom, joined to indefatigable industry and activity, together with almost entire freedom from any of those more violent passions which are most apt to be fatal to moderation and respectability, and an habitual respect for that external decency of demeanour which the aspect of the times was beginning to make a very necessary qualification for the occupancy of St. Peter's seat;—if all these qualities could suffice to form a pilot capable of weathering the coming storm, the Cardinal Giulio, now Clement VII., was the man for the occasion.

The leading objects of his papal administration, and indeed of his entire life, were first the aggrandisement of

A.D. 1523. the house of Medici, and the establishment of Alessandro, who was in all probability his own son, in possession of the absolute sovereignty of Florence. The second aim of his policy, but quite subordinately to the first, was the liberation of Italy, but especially of the ecclesiastical States, from the evils and dangers incessantly arising from the competing pretensions of rival foreign sovereigns to States within the peninsula, and the presence of their armies. In the third place, he was anxious to trim the course of his ecclesiastical policy so dexterously as to keep together, as far as might be still possible, the fragments of his spiritual authority, without running into the infinitely dreaded danger of a General Council.

The prospect of the future at the time of his elevation was a perplexed and troubled one, and the only path through it to the aims he had in view was most difficult and intricate. But a straight march along an open road would have been less congenial to the talents and temperament of the politic Pontiff. Placed comparatively powerless as to material strength between the two great contending forces, Charles and Francis; with his difficulties complicated by hot heads in Florence, and ere long by the additional troubles and dangers arising from the unruly passions and headlong violence of Henry VIII., he had little to depend on save his own talents for intrigue, dexterous craft, and wily policy. But the nature of the situation was exactly such as might seem to promise a fair hope of success to the sagacious use of these weapons. It should seem that Clement was exactly the man for the situation. Calm, moderate, unimpassioned, much experienced, active, vigilant, astute, with nothing genial, large, or noble about him, but decorous, correct, and eminently respectable, though at bottom unscrupulous, when scruples would have stopped his path, it might be thought that he, if any man, would be likely to rise a winner from the

slippery game of politics in which the powers of Europe were engaged. The world in general thought so at the time of his election. Yet the result was such that Clement has been deemed "the very sport of misfortune, and without doubt the most ill-fated Pontiff that ever sat on the papal throne."* A.D. 1523.

There is a large school of moralists who delight to teach, despite mankind's daily accumulating experience of facts, that spiritual graces ever find their reward in material profit; and which can see in the Divine government of the universe only an extended application of the nursery rule which assigns its skilfully arranged joys and sorrows as the immediately following consequences of good or ill behaviour. Such ethical philosophers may gather from the history of Clement VII. materials for a large and most victoriously conclusive discourse on their favourite theory. There was one quality, however, wholly wanting to the character of Clement, the possession of which might probably have made him a more successful without rendering him a more upright or a more virtuous man, and this was courage. Of physical courage, indeed, a Pope has generally, it may be supposed, no great need; but Clement was singularly deficient in that moral courage, without which prompt and decisive action in critical circumstances is impossible. He was ever timid and vacillating; so cautious as to stand still, till danger overwhelmed him, for want of courage to decide on a move in any direction. "His Holiness," says a Venetian ambassador,† "is exceedingly cold of heart; from which it results that he is timid in no ordinary degree,—not to say pusillanimous; a quality which I have, I think, commonly observed in the Florentine nature. This timidity causes his Holiness to be very irresolute,

* Ranke, Hist. of the Popes, chap. 3.

† Antonio Soriano, who read his report to the Venetian Senate in 1531. Relat. Ven., Second Series, vol. iii. p. 278.

A D 1523. and slow to decide; apt, moreover, to change his resolutions easily when he has taken them, and that not on grave grounds, which would be indeed the part of a wise man, but rather from insignificant and unimportant causes."

At the time of his elevation, Clement was the close ally and friend of the Emperor, whose power was firmly established at Naples, and for the moment in the ascendant also at Milan. The condition of Italy was most lamentable. The constant movement of necessitous and undisciplined troops, whose pay was always in arrear, had rendered the country little better than a desert. Milan, war-smitten, plague-smitten, famine-smitten, crushed, as a contemporary writer phrases it, even to the squeezing out of the blood of its inhabitants, and reduced to a condition of disorganization and misery that would have made any sane ruler pause ere he would accept the responsibility of attempting to rule it, was still, as it had been for so many years, the principal prize for which the Emperor and the French king were contending in Italy.

The same two rivals, as representatives of the houses of Arragon and Anjou, unhappily found but too readily competing pretensions to the throne of Naples also. Fortunate, comparatively, would it have been for Italy—still, as ever, "serva Italia di dolore ostello," the same "enslaved Italy, abiding place of woe," of whose sorrows Dante sang,—if she could only have been the undisputed thrall of one recognised master! But her shortcomings and weaknesses had doomed her not only to slavery, but to be trampled under the feet of tyrants, fighting for her mutilated body so unceasingly that, were it not for the unconquerable vitality of her richly-endowed physical nature, her plains must long since have been as those of Asia, and her cities as Nineveh and Palmyra.

In the necessity of steering their course between these

northern masters, wrangling, as a recent Italian poet has said, over her bones,* it might seem that the Pope and the other Italian powers would have found it simplest and safest to side with him who for the time being appeared the strongest. But the ever-present fear of being wholly overwhelmed, subdued, and absorbed by the "barbarian" prevented them from always adopting such a line of policy. The Spaniard, the Frenchman, and the German were probably hated by the Italians with very considerable impartiality, though alternating circumstances caused now one and now the other to be the principal object of their fear and aversion for the time being. And the unquenchable ever-yearning desire of every Italian heart to possess their own Italy, and to drive back the "barbarian" across the mountains from off her sacred soil, was always prompting her statesmen to strive at curbing the power of the oppressor, who chanced to be for the moment most in the ascendant, by lending a helping hand to his adversary. A.D. 1524.

And doubtless Clement was a sufficiently good Italian to wish for the expulsion of the stranger, if it could be accomplished without interfering with the success of more selfish and more dearly cherished plans. He desired it, but it was far from being the foremost object of his desire. It was so secondary to this, that he was ever eager to avail himself of the support of either Spain or France for the attainment of the end that really lay next his heart,—the establishment of his own family in the sovereignty of Florence.

Nothing could have been more unfortunate than the new Pope's first steps on the zig-zag path which he proposed to follow. Becoming alarmed at the preponderating power of Charles, in 1524, he entered into a league with Francis; but scarcely had this been concluded,

* Giuseppe Giusti. See the poem entitled "La terra dei Morti.

A.D. 1525. when the memorable battle of Pavia, resulting in the entire defeat of the French, on the 24th of February, 1525, and the captivity of the French king, frightened him back again into seeking anew the friendship of Charles in April* of that year. Each of these successive treaties was of course duly sworn to and declared inviolable; but it could hardly be expected that he who exercised the power of annulling other men's oaths would submit to be bound by his own, when the observance of them became inconvenient. Clement accordingly was not prevented by the solemn treaty of April, 1525, from conspiring against his new ally in the July following.

The object of this conspiracy was to induce Ferdinando Francesco d' Avalos, Marquis of Pescara, who commanded the army of Charles V. before Milan, to revolt against his sovereign, and join the Italians in an attempt to put an end for ever to Spanish sway in Italy. It was known that he was discontented with the court of Madrid, and that he was all-powerful with the army under his command. The bribe proposed to him was nothing less than the crown of Naples, the right of bestowing which the Pontiff arrogated to himself. But the Spanish general had no sooner secured clear evidence of the plans of the conspirators, by pretending to listen to their proposals, than he reported the whole to Charles.†

The miscarriage of this scheme, and the exposure consequent upon it, necessarily threw the vacillating and terrified Pontiff once more into the arms of Francis. "The Most Christian,"—as the old Italian historians often ellip-

* Concluded on the 1st of April, published on the 10th of May.

† A good deal of confusion as to the dates of these transactions exists in the narratives of the historians. Reumont, in his excellent chronological synopsis of Tuscan history, generally a perfectly safe guide, has fallen into the error of making this conspiracy anterior to the battle of Pavia. The statement in the text is based on the narratives of Varchi and Ammirato.

tically call the Kings of France,—obtained his release from his Madrid prison by promising on oath, on the 17th of January, 1526, all that Charles, driving a hard bargain, chose to demand of him. And Clement hastened to prove the sincerity of his renewed friendship by a professional contribution to the success of their new alliance, in the welcome shape of a plenary absolution from all observance of the oaths so sworn.* A.D. 1526.

Much illogical criticism has been expended on the deliberate breach by Francis of the obligations he had contracted towards Charles, resulting, as usual, from the attempt to apply to these transactions a standard of duty entirely different from that recognised by the parties concerned in them. Francis was absolved from the obligation of his oath, and this absolution was necessarily regarded as valid by Charles. There was no doubt about the Pope's power so to bind and to loose. Under such a system an oath becomes, of course, of very much diminished value as a security; and the resulting risk must, as in all such cases, have been discounted by the exactor of the oath. True, that honour, good faith, all noble trust of man in man, and even the very idea of the value and sacredness of truth, are destroyed and rendered impossible by such a creed. But this also is accepted, however consciously or unconsciously, by those who accept the doctrines from which these results necessarily follow. We from higher ground may thus criticise the morality which formed the code of both parties alike. But as between the "Most Catholic" and the "Most Christian" monarch, there was no just cause of complaint.

On the 22nd of May following, the Pope entered into a formal league with Francis. Venice joined her troops to those of the Ecclesiastical States, and they marched together

* Varchi, vol. i. p. 98, edit. Firenze, 1841.

A.D. 1526. to the support of the Milanese, who had risen in revolt against the Emperor. Assistance had also been promised by Henry of England, who had stipulated, however, that he should not be named as a party to the alliance, but only considered as its protector.*

This was the most strenuous and most united attempt Italy had yet made to rid herself of the domination of the stranger, and patriotic hopes beat high in several Italian hearts. Giovan Matteo Giberto, Bishop of Verona, the friend and counsellor of Clement, writes to the Bishop of Veruli that "this war is to decide whether Italy shall be free, or doomed to perpetual thraldom." He trusts that no foreign aid will be required. "The glory," he continues, "will be all our own, and so much sweeter will be the fruit." †

In the midst of all this making and breaking of alliances and oaths, and of the perplexities and alternating hopes and terrors arising from them, Clement, ever mindful of the great object of his ambition, sent off the young princes of his house from Rome to Florence,—Ippolito first, on the 30th of July, 1524, and Alessandro and Catherine shortly afterwards. Ippolito was the illegitimate son, it will be remembered, of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours; Alessandro, the illegitimate son of (in all probability) Clement VII.; and Catherine, the legitimate daughter of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino. They were all three entrusted to the care and guidance of Silvio Passerini, Cardinal of Cortona, who continued to be Clement's *alter ego* in Florence. Ippolito, though only fifteen years old, was declared eligible to all offices of state in the Republic; and resided in the Palazzo Medici with the Cardinal, to whom Clement had confided the government of the young man, and all real power in the State. Alessandro was sent to the beautiful villa of

* Varchi, vol. i. p. 98, ed. cit.

† Lettere di Principi, vol. i. p. 103.

Poggio a Caiano, situated on the Ombrone, about half way between Florence and Pistoia. He was placed under the tutorship of Rosso de' Ridolfi. The prudent Pontiff had judged it wise thus to separate the young men, says Ammirato, for fear of quarrels, which their mutual hatred had already made but too probable. A.D. 1526.

The very first result of the Pope's last step must have sufficed, it may well be thought, to convince him that it had been a false one. While the united Italian forces were marching towards Lombardy, a Diet was being held at Spires for the purpose of finding some remedy for the increasing disorders of the Church. It was one of the crises which occur again and again in the history of the Papal see, demonstrating the incompatibility of the interests of the Pontiff with those of the temporal sovereign of the Ecclesiastical States. Again and again the line of conduct required by the Pope's temporal interests as an Italian prince, is found to be opposed to that which ecclesiastical considerations would have dictated. In later days the latter have mainly prevailed. In the first half of the sixteenth century, a most critical epoch, the former were the most powerful. The dominant faith, not yet alarmed into earnestness by opposition and the competition of a rival, exercised but little living influence on the hearts and passions of men; and in the Popes of those days the prince always over-rode the bishop. Clement in this respect followed the example and traditional habits of thought of his predecessors. But his lot was cast on more difficult times. He stood on the verge of a new epoch, when the Papacy was about to pass into an entirely new phase of existence.

Ferdinand of Austria, who represented his brother the Emperor at Spires, "signed a decree of the Empire, whereby the States were declared free to comport themselves in matters of religion, as each should best answer it

A.D. 1526. to God and the Emperor, *i.e.*, according to their own private judgment. In this resolution no reference whatever was made to the Pope; and it may fairly be regarded as the commencement of the true reformation and the establishment of a new church in Germany."* There is every reason to think that things would not have happened thus had Clement not made Charles his enemy. For if worldly Clement had none of the earnestness of Paul IV., so neither had politic Charles the zeal and fanaticism of Philip II. The time for a Paul IV. and a Philip II. was coming, but was not yet come. And Charles V., no Spaniard, but a thoughtful Fleming, while he was in the main a good Catholic, was yet much persuaded that the Church needed reform. He was therefore not disinclined to hear what might be said in favour of the new doctrines, and was withal, in the somewhat unsettled state of his convictions at that period of his life, a sufficiently lukewarm religionist to permit the amount of support he was disposed to give the Pope to be very materially influenced by the changing considerations of State policy.

It may be easily imagined that the "Most Catholic" monarch felt towards Clement at this time in a manner which led him to distinguish very nicely between the infallible head of the universal Church and the sovereign of the Ecclesiastical States. The line of demarcation now so apparent to Charles has the property of becoming visible or invisible to royal eyes, according as the spiritual character of the Holy Father is invoked to sanction ecclesiastical tyranny against monarchs or against their people. This line now became so palpable to the "Most Catholic" Emperor, that, though he retained the utmost respect and reverence for the vicegerent of heaven, he thought that a little correction administered to the sovereign of Rome would not be

* Ranke, Hist. Popes, book i. chap. iii.

amiss, and nothing could be easier than to find means ready to his hand for the infliction of it. A.D. 1526.

The Colonnas were of course ready for a rebellion on the slightest encouragement. Indeed the Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, who specially hated Clement, fancied that if he could put his holy father the Pope out of the way, either by murdering or deposing him, he might very likely be able to get elected in his place. So when Don Ugo di Moncada, Charles's general at Naples, proposed to the Colonnas to join him in a little frolic at Clement's expense, the noble and most reverend members of that powerful family jumped at the proposal. They knew that the Pope had no troops immediately disposable for the defence of Rome, as he had recently, "not less," says Varchi, "in defiance of the dictates of prudence, than in obedience to those of parsimony,"* discharged them all on signing a truce some little time previously with Vespasian, the son of Prospero Colonna. The united forces of the Viceroy and the Colonnas accordingly one morning entered Rome, altogether without opposition, and marched at once to the Vatican. They completely sacked, not only the Pope's palace, and the residences of many gentlemen and prelates, but also, says the historian,† "with unheard-of avarice and impiety" robbed the sacristy of St. Peter of everything it contained.

Clement had barely time to escape into the castle of St. Angelo; but as he found there neither soldiers nor ammunition, nor even food for above three days, he was constrained at the end of that time to send a message to Don Ugo, begging him to come and treat with him for his deliverance. The most reverend Cardinal Pompeo Colonna was urgent with the general to do nothing of the sort. But Don Ugo had no hope of becoming Pope; and think-

* Storia Fiorentina, lib. ii. p. 103, ed. cit. † Varchi, *ibid.*

A.D. 1526. ing that Clement's chastisement had gone far enough, moved, moreover, as Varchi hints, by a promise of a sum of money for his own private purse, he consented to a treaty by which the Pope agreed to pardon the Colonnas freely for all they had done against him; to take no steps to revenge himself on them; to withdraw his troops from Lombardy; and to undertake nothing in any way, or under any pretext, against the Emperor; while on his part Don Ugo agreed on these conditions to restore the Pope to liberty, and to quit Rome with his troops.

To these terms Clement, in the impossibility of doing better, agreed. But of course nobody dreamed of taking his word for the fulfilment of them. Filippo Strozzi, Clement's dear friend, man of business, and family connection,* was, it seems, with him in St. Angelo during his confinement. Don Ugo peremptorily required a hostage for the fulfilment of the stipulations. Filippo was the very man to render the Pope this service;—unexceptionable to the Spanish general from his social position and wealth, and—as we may fancy the friendly Pope urging—so thoroughly acquainted with him, Clement, as to feel perfect confidence that he would run no risk from any breach of the conditions of the treaty. Filippo's knowledge of his old friend, on the contrary, was such as to make him feel that to go as hostage for his good faith was one of the last things in the world that he would have wished to undertake. He deemed it, however, either impossible or imprudent to refuse, and was accordingly marched off a prisoner to Naples by Don Ugo di Moncada.

"And now," says Varchi, thus concluding his account of this remarkable occurrence, "if anybody should wonder, as well they may, how it could possibly come to pass that neither the people of Rome, nor any other human being,

* By Strozzi's marriage with Clarice de' Medici, the sister of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino.

bestirred themselves to help the Pope in this his great danger against such a small number of enemies,—for they were in all, both horse and foot, not more than two thousand men,—let him know that Clement was at that time most hateful to men of all sorts and classes, and that for various reasons. On the clergy he had imposed new and unwonted tithes; from the officials of the Roman court he had on many occasions, and for many months together, kept back their pay; from the public professors of literature in the schools he had taken away their stipends; on commerce, stagnant as it was on account of the wars that were raging, and the fear of others that threatened, he had imposed exceedingly heavy customs and taxes. The soldiers of his own guard were so poorly and so irregularly paid, that it was with the greatest difficulty they could maintain themselves and their horses. He had thrown down the houses of many individuals for the sake of widening the streets of Rome, without ever paying them for their property. He suffered the people to be oppressed and starved, not so much by the natural scarcity and difficulties of those years, as by granting either for money or for favour privileges and monopolies to forestallers and regraters, whose operations monstrously enhanced the price of the necessaries of life. And in a word, the matter had come to such a point, that not only the friars in their pulpits, but many hermits in the squares of the city, preached to the people that not only the utter ruin of Italy, but even of the world, was at hand; and some of them, thinking that things could not be worse than they were, went so far as to maintain that Pope Clement was no other than Antichrist."* A.D. 1526.

Clement, the same historian assures us, knew all this, and all that men said of him, and his papacy, right well;

* Varchi, lib. ii. p. 105, ed. cit.

A.D. 1526. and the knowledge of it added intensity to the burning desire for revenge which was consuming him, when, by virtue of the treaty extorted from him by Don Ugo, he came forth from St. Angelo, and returned to his plundered and desolated palace. His first step was to take into his pay two thousand Swiss. Then he sent to Giovanni delle Bande Nere, desiring him to send him at once to Rome seven of those famous black companies, "who," says Varchi, "though they were not very many in number, were men of such a stamp that there was nothing they would not dare to attempt, and scarcely anything in which they would not succeed." The Pope at the same time wrote private letters to the chiefs of the League, warning them to pay no heed to any statement respecting a treaty made by him with the Emperor, and assuring them of his intention to carry on the war with the utmost energy. Besides the two thousand Swiss and the seven Black Companies, the Pope bargained with several of the lawless ruffian barons of his own States,—a Colonna of Palestrina, who was at feud with the rest of his family, a Savelli, an Orsini, and a Farnese,—to supply him with a thousand horsemen.

The first article of the treaty, for the due execution of which Filippo had been given as hostage, was, it will be remembered, the free and entire pardon of the Colonnas for all that they had done against the Pope; but as soon as ever Clement had got the above troops together, he commenced such an attack upon that family, as rarely any Pope has made upon non-heretical enemies. Upon this occasion at all events, the temporal and the spiritual arm pulled in perfect concord together. The troops were directed to enter the territories of the Colonnas, and to spare nothing, neither property nor life, to burn and destroy houses, men, women, and children. Fourteen of the castles (by which word must be understood fortresses

with more or less of villages attached to them) belonging to the proscribed family were razed to the ground. "And an infinite number of men and women," says honest Varchi, "suffered much of wrong and shame, although they had been wholly blameless in all these matters." A.D. 1526.

The "spiritual arm" meanwhile was working with unflagging energy for the more perfect gratification of the papal vengeance. Clement fulminated excommunications and interdicts, and every kind of curse in Rome's well-furnished spiritual arsenal upon the territories, the habitations, and the persons of the devoted family, their partisans and adherents. It was a Glencoe massacre, with the additional zest of killing souls as well as bodies. To massacre husbands and wives, parents and children, in each other's sight, might glut the revengeful rage of a rude layman. But to dispatch them without shrift or sacrament, despairing, into an eternity of torment,—this had a flavour of vengeance fit for the spiritual palate of an offended Pope, even though that Pope were a Medici.

Manners of the time! Yes; that a Pope, who could absolve himself from all obligation of an oath, as easily as he could wash his hands, should break a treaty when even laymen were continually doing as much, was of course no marvel;—the only strange thing being, that any body should ever have thought it worth while to exact any promise or oath from a "spiritual person." That an offended sovereign should burn, slay, and lay waste was also natural enough and according to the manners of the time. That an offended Pope should curse and anathematize as well, was also to be expected; and thus far Clement was acting quite according to "the spirit of the age" in which he lived. But if the Colonnas and their friends had no just ground of complaining against the Pope, such was not the case with Filippo Strozzi. To

A.D. 1526. abandon thus a hostage to his fate, under circumstances too which indicated clearly enough that it had been the intention of him, for whom the pledge was given, to do so at the very moment of entering into the bond;—this was a damning deed, even according to the morality of the sixteenth century. It was more; it was wholly ungentlemanlike, it was mean, base, treacherous, shabby, false in one of the very few circumstances of life, in which a man was, in those days, expected to be true. It was a deed that, in all probability, no one of those ruthless crime-stained barbarous barons, whom the Pope had hired to do the secular part of his vengeance for him, would have stooped to. To such conduct is due the remarkable tone of contempt, which is mingled with the hatred of Clement, that may be read in almost every page of the contemporary historians.

It was fortunate for Filippo Strozzi that he had been delivered into the hands of Don Ugo, the Spanish general, instead of into those of the Cardinal Colonna. The former had carried him off to Naples immediately on the signing of the treaty, and kept him there a close prisoner. But as soon as ever the Pope began his crusade against the Colonnas, in flagrant breach of his faith, the Cardinal Pompeo made urgent and repeated application to Don Ugo to have the hostage given up to him, that he might put him to death. One of the arguments, which he used, to induce him to do so, is worth recording. Francis I., who after the battle of Pavia had become Charles V.'s prisoner, and had been taken to Madrid, had been restored to liberty, on signing a treaty, and leaving his sons hostages with Charles, as pledges for its fulfilment. Now under those circumstances, urged the Cardinal Colonna, nothing could be more judicious or more useful to the Emperor's interests than putting to death a hostage, whose principal had broken his faith. It would act as an

admirable hint to Francis to mind what he was about, and tend more than anything else could to keep him to his engagements with Charles.* Don Ugo, however, who had not the same reason for passionate anger as the persecuted Colonnas, seems from jealousy of his own authority over the prisoner, who was given into his keeping, to have demurred to giving him up. And while his hesitation lasted, Filippo hit upon a scheme for saving himself, appeasing the Colonnas, and punishing his dear friend Clement, at one blow. A.D. 1526.

Having managed to obtain means of communication with two Florentine exiles then in Naples, he sent them to the Cardinal Colonna with proposals, to the effect, that if he were suffered to go free, and return to Florence, he could cause that city to revolt against the Medici, and secure its adherence to the Emperor. The Cardinal Colonna's anger was of course against Clement, and not against Strozzi; and this scheme promised not only to gratify his indignation, but to be the means of strengthening very considerably the Emperor's party in Italy. The Colonna, therefore, jumped at the proposition, and immediately used all his interest with Don Ugo to obtain Strozzi's liberty.

And it is probable, that Filippo Strozzi was promising no more than he was able to perform. For discontent and disaffection had been growing rapidly of late in Florence, under the rule of Clement's governor Silvio Passerini, the Cardinal of Cortona. Such men as Pope Clement always get badly served by the subordinates in whom they put their confidence. Their policy is to employ creatures rather than friends. Despotic by temper, and false by principle as well as by nature, they seek only for blind unreasoning obedience to orders; and fearing in their

* Vita di F. Strozzi di Lorenzo Strozzi, ed. cit. p. 41.

A.D. 1526. instruments not incapacity, but treason, they think it prudence to guard against the latter by employing men whose fate appears to be linked with their own, and whose ruin must follow their own fall. And servants chosen upon these principles are not likely to be of a high class of either intelligence or character.

Such a creature of Clement was this Silvio Passerini, Cardinal of Cortona. Varchi says of him, that "besides being extremely avaricious, *like most prelates*, he had neither intellect to understand the Florentine character, nor judgment to have managed it, if he had comprehended it." All his care was by vigilant spying to know all that was going on in the city; and by every sort of newly-imagined tax to squeeze as much as possible out of the citizens. Disaffection to the government had therefore grown to a perilous height, even among those, who were traditional adherents of the Medici; "since now-a-days," says Varchi, "there is nothing that touches every man so closely, and makes him feel so sorely, as calling upon him to disburse cash!" Now-a-days, says honest Varchi, three hundred years ago!

It is likely enough, therefore, that Strozzi might have succeeded in making a revolution in Florence, if he had dared to set boldly about it. But it so turned out, that another sharp turn in Clement's tortuous policy changed the position of the pieces on the political chessboard, and made it unnecessary for Strozzi to play so bold a game. While the negotiation between the Cardinal Colonna and Don Ugo respecting the giving up of Filippo Strozzi was going on, the Pope entered into a treaty with the Viceroy of Naples, which once more made him the Emperor's friend; and as a consequence liberated Strozzi unconditionally.

But other forces had been put in motion by the Emperor for the prosecution of the war in Lombardy against the

perjured Francis, and for the punishment of the faithless Pope. And though the treaty made by Clement with the Viceroy, in March, 1527, would seem in some sort to imply the reconciliation once again of the Pope and the Emperor, yet it seemed very doubtful how far Charles was willing to accept the reconciliation made for him by his lieutenant, so entirely as to take prompt measures for arresting the action of the forces he had set in motion;—doubtful whether even, if he were so willing, he had the immediate power to do so. A.D. 1527.

The Constable Bourbon, whom the gross injustice of Francis I., and the intolerable persecution of his infamous mother, Louise de Savoie, had driven to abandon his country and allegiance, and to offer his services and great military talents to Charles V., and who had largely contributed to win for his new master the great battle of Pavia, was now,—November, 1526,—marching southwards with the imperial troops to chastise the different members of the League against the Emperor, which Clement, as has been seen, had formed. George Frundsberg, a German leader of reputation, had also crossed the Alps with fifteen thousand men,—"all Lutherans and Lanzknechts," as the Italians write with horror and dismay,—and had joined these forces to the Spaniards under Bourbon. The "Lanzighinetti," or "Lanzi," for short,—as the Italian authors write the, to them, strange and dreadful word, Lutherans as they were, appear to have been no whit more or less savage, lawless, and ferocious than their Spanish Catholic fellow-soldiers. The combined force was in all respects more like a rabble-rout of brigands and bandits than an army; and was assuredly such, as must, even in those days, have been felt to be a disgrace to any sovereign permitting them to call themselves his soldiers. Their pay was, as was often the case with the troops of Charles V., hopelessly in arrear, and discipline was of course propor-

A.D. 1527. tionably weak among them. Indeed it seemed every now and then on the point of coming to an end altogether. The two generals had the greatest difficulty in preventing their army from becoming an entirely anarchical and disorganised mob of freebooters, as dangerous to its masters as to everybody else. Of course food, raiment, and shelter were the first absolute essentials for keeping this dangerous mass of armed men in any degree of order and organization; and, in fact, the present march of Frundsberg and Bourbon had the obtaining of these necessaries for its principal and true object.

The progress southward of this bandit army unchecked by any opposing force (for Giovanni delle Bande Nere had lost his life in an attempt to prevent them from passing the Po; and after the death of that great captain, the army of the league did not muster courage to attack or impede the invaders in any way;) filled the cities exposed to their inroad with terror and dismay. They had passed like a destroying locust swarm over Bologna and Imola, and crossing the Apennines, which separate Umbria from Tuscany, had descended into the valley of the Arno not far from Arezzo. Florence and Rome both trembled. On which would the storm burst? That was the all-absorbing question.

Pope Clement, with his usual avarice-blinded imbecility, had, immediately on concluding the above-mentioned treaty with the Neapolitan viceroy, discharged all his troops except a body-guard of about six hundred men. Florence was nearly in as defenceless a position. She had, says Varchi, "two great armies on her territory; one, that under Bourbon, which came as an enemy to sack and plunder her; and the other, that of the league, which came as a friend to protect her, but sacked and plundered her none the less." It was however probably the presence of this army, little as it had hitherto done to impede the pro-

gress of the enemy, which decided Bourbon eventually to determine on marching towards Rome. A.D. 1527.

It seems doubtful how far they were in so doing executing the orders, or carrying out the wishes of the Emperor. Clement, though he had played the traitor to Charles, as he did to every one else, and had been at war with him recently, had now entered into a treaty with the Emperor's viceroy. And apart from this there was a degree of odium and scandal attaching to the sight of the "Most Catholic" emperor sending a Lutheran army in his pay to attack the head of the Church, and ravage the venerated capital of Christendom, which so decorous a sovereign as Charles would hardly have liked to incur. Still it may be assumed that if the Emperor wished his army kept together, and provided no funds for the purpose, he was not unwilling that they should live by plunder. And perhaps his real intention was to extort from Rome the means of paying his troops by the mere exhibition of the danger arising from their propinquity, while they remained unpaid. Upon the whole we are warranted in supposing that Bourbon and Frundsberg would hardly have ventured on the course they took, if they had not had reason to believe that it would not much displease their master. And Charles was exactly that sort of man who would like to have the profit of an evil deed, without the loss of reputation arising from the commission of it; and who would consider himself best served by agents who could commit a profitable atrocity, without being guilty of the annoying want of tact of waiting for his direct orders to commit it.

For the especial business in hand, it was impossible, moreover, to have had two more fitting agents than Bourbon and Frundsberg. It was not every knightly general in those days who would have accepted the task, even with direct orders, of marching to the sack of Rome, and the open defiance of its sacred ruler. A Florentine or a Neapolitan

A.D. 1527. soldier might have had small scruple in doing so; and a Roman baron—a Colonna or an Orsini—none at all. For in the case of a Pope, more than in any other, it may be said that "distance lends enchantment to the view." In all ages the reverence for the papacy has been in inverse proportion to the distance of its disciples from the throne of their ghostly sovereign. Even as at the present day it is in that distant western isle, which the old times deemed to be cut off from the rest of the world by its remoteness, that the authority and the prestige of the Roman pontiff are more intact and vigorous than among any less remote community; so in the sixteenth century, when the Alps were the veil which screened the grand-Lama-like vicegerent of Heaven from the too close examination of his worshippers, there would have been found few men of such mark as Bourbon, in either France or Spain, willing to have undertaken the enterprise he was now engaged in. But the unfortunate Constable was a disgraced and desperate man. He was disgraced in the face of Europe by the unknightly breach of his fealty to his sovereign, despite the intensity of the provocation which had driven him to that step. For all the sanctions which held European society together in the universal bondage, which alone then constituted social order, were involved in maintaining the superstition that so branded him. And he was desperate in his fortunes; for though no name in all Europe was at that day as great a military power at the head of a host, as that of Bourbon, and though the miserable bearer of it had so shortly before been one of the wealthiest and largest territorial nobles of France, yet the great Constable had now his sword for his fortune as barely as the rawest lad in the rabble-rout that followed him, sent out from some landless tower of an impoverished knight in half-starved Galicia, or poverty-stricken Navarre, to carve his way in the world. Even among those whose ranks he had joined, Bourbon was a

disgraced and ruined man beyond redemption. Although his well-known military capacity had easily induced Charles to welcome and make use of him, he must have felt that the step he had taken in breaking his allegiance and abandoning his country, had rendered him an outcast and almost a pariah in the estimation of the chivalry of Europe. The feeling he had awakened against him throughout Christendom, is strikingly illustrated by an anecdote recorded of his reception at Madrid. When, shortly after winning the battle of Pavia, Bourbon went thither to meet Charles, and the Marquis of Villane was requested to lodge the victorious general in his palace, the haughty Spaniard told the Emperor that his house and all that he possessed were at his sovereign's disposition, but that he should assuredly burn it down as soon as Bourbon was out of it; since, having been sullied by the presence of a renegade, it could no longer be a fitting residence for a man of honour.* So low had Bourbon fallen! Every man's hand was against him; and his hand was against every man. And it is easy to conceive what must have been his tone of mind and feeling, as he led on his mutinous robber-rout to Rome, while men of all parties looked on in panic-stricken horror. Thus Bourbon led his unpaid and mutinous hordes to a deed, which, none knew better than he, would shock and scandalize all Europe, as a man, who having fallen already so low as to have lost all self-respect, cares not in his reckless despair to what depths he plunges. A.D. 1527.

As for Frundsberg, he was a mere soldier of fortune, whose world was his camp, whose opinions and feelings had been formed in quite another school from those of his fellow general; whose code of honour and of morals was an entirely different one, and whose conscience was not only perfectly at rest respecting the business he was bound

* This anecdote is told in the preface to the Memoirs of Du Bellay, in the seventeenth volume of the Collection Petitot, p. 83.

A.D. 1527. on, but approved of it as a good and meritorious work for the advancement of true religion. He carried round his neck a halter of golden tissue, we are told,* with which he loudly boasted that he would hang the Pope as soon as he got to Rome; and had others of crimson silk at his saddle bow, which he said were destined for the cardinals!

Too late Clement became aware of the imminence and magnitude of the danger that threatened him and the capital of Christendom. He besought the Viceroy, who had recently signed a treaty with him, as has been seen, to exert himself and use his authority to arrest the southward march of Bourbon's army. And it is remarkable that this representative of the Emperor in the government of Naples did, as it should seem, endeavour earnestly to avert the coming avalanche from the Eternal City. But while the Emperor's viceroy used all his authority and endeavours to arrest the advance of the Emperor's army, the Emperor's generals advanced and sacked Rome in despite of him. Which of them most really acted according to the secret wishes of that profound dissembler, and most false and crafty monarch, it is impossible to know. It may have been that Bourbon himself had no power to stay the plundering bandit-like march of his hungry and unpaid troops. And the facts recorded of the state of discipline of the army are perfectly consistent with such a supposition.

The Viceroy sent a messenger to Bourbon, while he was yet in Bologna, informing him of the treaty signed with Clement, and desiring him therefore to come no further southward. Bourbon, bent, as Varchi says, on deceiving both the Pope and the Viceroy, replied that if the Pope would send him two hundred thousand florins for distribution to the army, he would stay his march. But

* Varchi, Stor. Fioren. vol. i. p. 110, ed. cit.

while this answer was carried back to Rome, the tumultuous host continued its fearfully menacing advance; and the alarm in Rome was rapidly growing to desperate terror. At the Pope's earnest request, the Viceroy, "who knew well," says Varchi, "that His Holiness had not a farthing," himself took post, and rode hard for Florence with letters from Clement, hoping to obtain the money there. A.D. 1527.

The departure of the Viceroy in person, and the breathless haste of his ride to Florence, speak vividly of the urgency of the case, and of the Spanish officer's personal anxiety respecting the dreadful fate which threatened Rome. But the Florentines do not seem to have been equally impressed with the necessity of losing no time in making an effort to avert the calamity from a rival city. It was "after much talking" we are told, that they at last consented to advance an hundred and fifty thousand florins, eighty thousand in cash down, and the remainder by the end of October. It was now April; and Bourbon had by this time crossed the Apennine, and was with his army on the lower western slopes of the mountain, not far from the celebrated monastery of Lavernia. Thither the Viceroy hurried with all speed, accompanied by only two servants and a trumpeter; and having "with much difficulty," says Varchi, come to speech with the general, proffered him the eighty thousand florins. Upon which he was set upon by the tumultuous troops, and "narrowly escaped being torn in pieces by them." In endeavouring to get away from them, and make his way back to Florence, he fell into the hands of certain peasants near Camaldoli, and was here again in danger of his life, and was wounded in the head. He was, however, rescued by a monk of Vallombrosa, and by him conducted to the neighbouring little town of Poppi in the Casentino, or upper valley of the Arno, from whence he made his way to Siena, and so back

A.D. 1527. to Rome, with no pleasant tidings of what might be expected from Bourbon and his brigand army.

The Vallombrosan monk, who thus bested the Viceroy at his need, was, as Varchi records, rewarded by the bishopric of Muro in the kingdom of Naples, which, adds the historian, "he still holds."

The fate of Rome was now no longer doubtful. Clement, who by his penny-wise parsimony had left himself defenceless, made a feeble and wholly vain attempt to put the city in a state of defence. The corrupt and cowardly citizens could not have opposed any valid resistance to the ruffian hordes, who were slowly but surely, like an advancing conflagration, coming upon them, even if they had been willing to do their best. But the trembling Pope's appeal to them to defend the walls, fell on the ears of as sorely trembling men, each thinking only of the possible chances of saving his own individual person. Yet it seems clear that means of defence might have been found, had not the Pope been thus paralysed by terror. Clement however was as one fascinated. Martin du Bellay tells us, that he himself, then in Italy as ambassador from Francis I., hurried to Rome, and warned the Pope of his danger in abundant time for him to have prepared for the protection of the city by the troops he had at his disposal. But no persuasion availed to induce Clement to take any step for that purpose.* Neither would he seek safety by flight, nor permit his unfortunate subjects to do so. John de Casale, Henry VIII.'s ambassador at Venice, writes thence to Wolsey on the 16th of May,—the fatal tidings of the sack of the city having just reached Venice, as follows. "He"—Clement—"refused to quit the city for some safer place. He even forbade by edict that any one should carry anything out of the gates on pain of death, though

* Du Bellay, Col. Pet. vol. xvii. p. 26.

many were anxious to depart, and carry their fortunes elsewhere." * A.D. 1527.

Meantime Florence, for her own protection, had hastily induced Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino, to place himself at the head of the remaining forces of the Italian league, and by taking up a position at Incisa, a small town in the upper Valdarno, about twenty miles from the city, on the road to Arezzo, the torrent was turned off from the capital of the Commonwealth. Probably as soon as the invading army once found itself to the south of Florence, that wealthy city was in no immediate danger. Rome was metal more attractive to the invaders, even had there not been an army between them and Florence.

And now it became frightfully clear that the doom of the Eternal City was at hand. On came the strangely heterogeneous rout of lawless soldiery, leaving behind them a trail of burned and ruined cities, devastated fields, and populations plague-stricken from the contamination engendered by the multitude of their unburied dead.

On the 5th of May Bourbon arrived beneath the walls of Rome. During the last few days the unhappy Pope had endeavoured to arm what men he could get together under Renzo da Ceri, and one Horatius—not Cocles unhapppily—but Baglioni. "Rome contained within her walls," says Ranke, "some thirty thousand inhabitants capable of bearing arms. Many of these men had seen service. They wore swords by their sides, which they had used freely in their broils among each other, and then boasted of their exploits. But to oppose the enemy, who brought with him certain destruction, five hundred men were the utmost that could be mustered within the city. At the first onset the Pope and his forces were overthrown." On the evening of the 6th of May the city was stormed, and

* The letter is No. 155 in the collection of State Papers of Henry VIII.'s reign, vol. vi. p. 578.

A.D. 1527. given over to the unbridled cupidity and brutality of the soldiers, who during many a long day of want and hardship had been looking forward to the hour that was to repay them amply for all past sufferings, by the boundless gratification of every sense, and every caprice of lawless passion. Bourbon himself had fallen in the first moments of the attack, as he was leading his men to scale the walls; and any small influence that he might have exerted in moderating the excesses of the conquerors was thus at an end.

It does not fall within the scope of the present work to attempt any detailed account of the days and scenes that followed. They have been described by many writers; and the reader, who bears in mind what Rome was,—her vileness, her cowardice, her imbecility, her wealth, her arts, her monuments, her memories, her helpless population of religious communities of both sexes, and the sacred character of her high places and splendours, which served to give an additional zest to the violence of triumphant heretics,—he that bears in mind all these things, may safely give the rein to his imagination without any fear of overcharging the picture. Frundsberg had been wont to boast that if ever he reached Rome, he would hang the Pope. He never did reach it, having been carried off by a fit of apoplexy while striving to quell a mutiny among his troops shortly after leaving Bologna, on his southward march. But the threat is sufficiently indicative of the spirit that animated his army, to show that Clement owed his personal safety only to the strength of the castle of St. Angelo, in which he sought refuge.

CHAPTER IV.

Effect on Europe of the sack of Rome—Feeling on the subject at Florence—The news slow to reach Florence—Disturbances at Florence—Quelled by the troops in the vicinity—Varchi's account of the state of Florence—Arrival of Filippo Strozzi at Pisa—His calculations, and conduct—Sends his wife to Florence—Her conduct on reaching the city—Position of the "Ottimati"—Imbecility of the Cardinal of Cortona—Crà del Piccadiglio—Clarice Strozzi at the Medici palace—Her address to the Cardinal of Cortona—She sends to her husband to come to Florence—Sends her children out of the city—Strozzi comes to Florence—His caution—He goes to the Cardinal at the Medici palace—His double dealing—Hypocrisy respecting his wife's conduct—He goes to the sitting of the Great Council—Returns to the Medici—Counsels them to leave the city—Their indecision—Strozzi sends Clarice to them a second time—Her address to the Cardinal and the young princes—They decide on quitting the city—Their departure.

The sensation produced throughout Europe by the dreadful misfortune which had fallen on the Eternal City was immense. John da Casale, in the letter cited above, says that it would have been better for Rome to have been taken by the Turks, when they were in Hungary, as the infidels would have perpetrated less odious outrages and less horrible sacrilege.* Clerk, bishop of Bath, writes to Wolsey from Paris on the 28th of May following: "Please it, your Grace, after my most humble recommendation, to understand that about the fifteenth of this moneth, by letters sent from Venyce, it was spoken, that the Duke of Burbon with the armye imperyall by vyolence shold enter Rome as the 6th of this moneth; and that in the same

* State Papers of Henry VIII., vol. vi. p. 579.

A.D. 1527. entree the said Duke should be slayne; and that the Pope had savyd Himself with his Cardynalls in Castell Angell; whiche tydinges bycause they ware not written unto Venyce, but upon relation of a souldier, that came from Rome to Viterbe, and bycause ther cam hither no maner of confirmation therof unto this day, thay war not belevyd. This day ther is come letters from Venyce confyrming the same tydinges to be true. They write also that they have sackyd and spoylyd the town, and slayne to the nombre of 45,000, non parcentes nec etati nec sexui nec ordini; amongst other that they have murdryd a marveillous sorte of fryars, and agaynst pristes and churchis they have behavyd thymselfes as it doth become Murranys and Lutherans * to do."

How deeply Wolsey himself was moved by the news is seen by a letter from him to Henry VIII., written on the 2nd of June following. He forwards to the King the letters "nowe arryved, as wel out of Fraunce as out of Italy, confirming the piteous and lamentable spoiles, pillages, with most cruel murdres, committed by the Emperialls in the citie of Rome, non parcentes sacris, etati, sexui, aut relioni; and the extreme daungier that the Poopes Holines and Cardinalles, who fled into the Castel Angel, wer in, if by meane of the armye of the liege, they should not be shortly socoured and releved. Which, sire, is matier that must nedes commove and stire the hartes of al good christen princes and people to helpe and put their handes with effecte to the reformacion therof, and the repressing of such tirannous * demenour."

Even Charles himself affected at least to mourn the success of his own army. Nowhere did this terrible Italian misfortune fail to awaken sympathy and compassion save in a rival Italian city. Florence heard the tidings,

* State Papers, Henry VIII., vol i. p. 186. † *Ibid.*

says Varchi, with the utmost delight. The same historian expresses his own opinion, that the sack of Rome was at once the most cruel and the most merited chastisement ever inflicted by heaven.* And another Florentine writer piously accounts for the failure of all the means adopted to avert the calamity, by supposing that it was God's eternal purpose then and thus to chastise the crimes of the Roman prelates;†—a theory, it may occur to some minds, somewhat damaged by the unfortunate fact, that the greater part of the miseries suffered in those awful days were inflicted on the unhappy flocks of those purple shepherds. Nevertheless the sixteenth-century theory needs but a little enlarging to bring it up to the level reached by nineteenth-century philosophy. And this, too, is a perfectly homogeneous portion of the divine government;—the admonition conveyed thereby, somewhat sternly and peremptorily, as is the wont and the need of such divine messages, being, that all such purple shepherds, "reges," Macchiavellian "principi," and other such dangerous phenomena, are the faulty product of the societies which suffer from and by them, and should be, like other maleficent physical and moral agencies, suppressed, abolished, and got rid of as soon as may be. A.D. 1527.

The news of the taking by assault and sack of Rome did not reach Florence till the 12th of May, having thus taken six days to travel a distance of less than two hundred miles. It is one of the very rare instances on record of tidings of great interest and public notoriety travelling more slowly than could have been expected. The reverse is generally the case to a very extraordinary degree. And this exception to the general rule represents to us, perhaps, more vividly than any other circumstance, the utter desolation which had been caused by the march of Bourbon's

* Vol. i. p. 164, ed cit.

† Ammirato, lib. xxx. Gonf. 1358.

A.D. 1527. army, and that total cutting off of one district from another, by which a continuation of wars was reducing the country to a state of barbarism, as rapidly as increased facility of intercommunication forces forward civilization. On the 11th of May, indeed, it had been rumoured vaguely in Florence that Rome had been successfully attacked by the imperial forces. It is possible that the government had surer information, and, in order to gain a little time, availed themselves of the fact that Bourbon had fallen, to cause it to be believed for a short time that his army had been routed, and Rome saved. It was impossible, however, to keep the fatal tidings concealed for many days. The real truth was soon generally known; and then Florence clapped her hands for joy.

And it was but a few months before that Italy had been proposing to herself to march with united forces, shoulder to shoulder against the "barbarians," and drive them out of the peninsula!

All that we have so constantly heard about the municipal rivalries and enmities that caused Italian mediæval patriotism to be ever bounded by city walls, is hardly enough to prepare us for hearing that the news of the tremendous calamity which excited the horror and pity of all Europe, was "most grateful to the Florentines." But it is the Florentine historian Varchi who assures us that it was so. The truth was, however, that it was not hatred of Rome so much as hatred of Rome's sovereign,—their own Pope Giulio de' Medici,—which made the Florentines rejoice in the misfortune that had overwhelmed him and his Roman subjects. Rome's misfortune was the Tuscan city's opportunity. Clement was a prisoner in the castle of St. Angelo; and now or never was the time for Florence once again to free herself from the incubus of the Medici.

Already before the news arrived, the city, under the weak yet violent government of the Cardinal of Cortona,

had been manifesting symptoms very disquieting to its masters. And an incident which happened on the 26th of April in that memorable year, 1527, only ten days before the capture of Rome, might have served as a pilot balloon to show the direction which the storm of the great events so soon to follow would take. The Cardinal Passerini and the leading adherents of the existing government had gone out of the city to meet the Duke of Urbino, for the purpose of concerting measures for the defence of Florence from Bourbon's army then in the vicinity. The opportunity was too tempting to be resisted; and the republican party determined on attempting a change of the government by a *coup de main*. They seized the *Palazzo Pubblico;* sounded the tocsin; cried "*Popolo! popolo!*" and filled the *piazza* with armed men, all according to the old plan by which so many a revolution had been effected in the old times. There were, however, large bodies of foreign troops near at hand, and the Cardinal returned at once into the city with a sufficient force to make any attempt at resistance hopeless. Nevertheless, the partisans of the Medici felt that this was not the moment for violence or vengeance. The republicans, who were in possession of the palace, were persuaded, principally by Francesco Guicciardini, and by Marco Foscari, the Venetian ambassador, to retire quietly, on condition that all should be forgotten on both sides. And thus for the moment order was restored;—such order as was possible in such a state of things. For the picture drawn in a few words by Varchi of the aspect of the city in those days is strikingly suggestive of the explosive condition of the social atmosphere.

A.D. 1527.

"Florence," says he, "remained the prey and the scorn of those soldiers whose duty it was to protect it. It is impossible for any one, however lively his imagination may be, to picture to himself the immeasurable gloom and sad-

A.D. 1527. ness that weighed both on the city and on the country around it. The latter had been plundered and laid waste, not less by those who professed to be our friends than by our enemies. In the city more military jerkins than citizen's cloaks were to be seen; there were more arms than men; and it seemed as if those who passed in the streets dared not lift up their eyes, partly in shame, and partly in fear, and from utter distrust not only of every other man, but even of themselves. The drums were continually making their rounds; there was no hour of day or night without turning out of the guards or patrols of soldiers. At every slightest alarm, if it were but the falling of a pike on the pavement, or if more than three men stood together, or if two talked together at all earnestly, the soldiers ran to the spot to warn and threaten them. Then in a moment a tumult would arise, and the shops would be closed in all haste, and the citizens would run, as if in terror, and shut themselves into their houses."*

Such was the state of Florence, when the citizens heard that their tyrant was a prisoner in his own castle of St. Angelo. It was already known in Florence that Filippo Strozzi had arrived in Pisa,† and the eyes of all parties in the city, in the surging tumult and confusion that immediately arose, turned towards him, as having more power than any other man to restore tranquillity by assuring the ascendancy of one or the other party. Messengers were dispatched to him in all haste both by the Cardinal of Cortona, who counted on him as an assured supporter of the Medici, and by Niccolò Capponi, who was his brother-in-law, having married his sister, and

* Varchi, Stor. Fior. vol. i. p. 163, ed. cit.

† He had succeeded in escaping with his wife Clarice from Rome on the eve of the attack by Bourbon's army, despite the strict orders of the Pope that no one should be permitted to leave the city.

who, as leader of that part of the aristocracy which wished to restore a measure of constitutional liberty to Florence without conceding all the demands of the radical party, trusted that Strozzi would join them in throwing off the yoke of that family. A.D. 1527.

Never had Strozzi greater need to exercise his much vaunted prudence than in dealing with these rival applications from his fellow-citizens. The conjuncture was undeniably a difficult one. The Pope—the only Medici of the elder branch, save two lads and the little girl Catherine—was the prisoner of lawless soldiers in St. Angelo. He was at deadly feud with the Emperor. The fortunes of that monarch were strongly in the ascendant over those of Francis I. Florence, long heaving with ill-suppressed anger and rebellion, was ready for any move, however violent, in a popular and democratic direction. No dangerous opposition was to be feared on the one hand from the feeble and frightened Cardinal of Cortona, and on the other no efficient assistance to be hoped for from him. Nothing would have been easier at the moment than for Strozzi to have placed himself at the head of a popular movement, which would assuredly for the while have carried all before it. And many men might have deemed it the safest, as well as the easiest and the most tempting, course to take.

But Filippo Strozzi had little trust in the constancy of Florentine popular sentiment, and much in the constancy of Medicean ambition. He counted much on the vitality of the Papal power, and little on any quarrel between Pope and Emperor to the profit of popular freedom. For he knew that it is in the nature of popes and emperors to be friends when either of them is in contest with the people, and clearly understood that that many-headed monster was the real never-changing foe, against whom both pope and emperor must wage an unintermitting war, equally neces-

A.D. 1527. sary to both of them. In a word, Filippo Strozzi could tell of more than one Medicean restoration, and was quite aware of the great probability that he might live to see another.

On the other hand, it might well be questioned whether it would be prudent or even safe for Strozzi to enter Florence in its present humour as an avowed supporter of the Medici. Besides he knew them, these Medici, and especially Clement, well enough to be quite sure that no compensating gratitude was to be looked for from them, whenever the turn in the tide of their fortunes should take place, if he were to decide on playing the waiting game for their restoration. Again, there was another difficulty in the way of adopting either of these courses frankly and decidedly. The great anti-Medicean nobles, who may be compared to our great whig families, were anxious to get rid of that great overshadowing Upas-tree of a family, but were by no means anxious to favour such a radical revolution as should throw political power into the hands of the people. This party, who were called the "Ottimati," —the Aristocracy, that is (merely turning Latin into Greek),—wished in fact to establish an oligarchy much on the model of that of Venice. And Strozzi by birth, by old family connection, and by position in the city, naturally belonged to this party. But these *Ottimati* were exposed to a twofold danger,—one immediate from popular violence, and one prospective from Medicean vengeance.

The determination ultimately arrived at in these perplexities by Strozzi was a characteristic one. Instead of venturing forward into the disturbed city himself, he determined to send his wife, the haughty and high-spirited Clarice, who, Medici as she was, hated Clement for his treachery to her husband, with an unforgiving hatred, and was ready to go all lengths and run all risks for the sake of punishing him. The fearless lady, accordingly, leaving

her prudent husband safe in hiding in Pisa, and undertaking to send for him when she should have sufficiently sounded the ground and prepared the way for him, departed on her mission. A.D. 1527.

Her first care was to seek a private interview, on the evening of her arrival, with Niccolò Capponi, the principal leader of the *Ottimati*, or patrician oligarchical party. Some others of the leading members of the party were admitted to this secret sitting, in which Clarice, far more violently and frankly than her husband would in all probability have approved, exhorted them to go all lengths in expelling the Medici, and promised her own and her husband's entire adhesion and co-operation. Niccolò Capponi had been for some time past secretly exciting the people, and preparing them for an outbreak. But the game he and his peers, the other anti-Medicean nobles, had to play was a delicate one, and required very cautious handling. The Medici could not be turned out without the aid of the popular element. It was necessary to make common cause with the populace, and adopt their tone and their watchwords. But the objects of these great Florentine whigs and those of the people were in fact wholly different. "Liberty" was the cry, to a certain extent sincere, of both the malcontent sections of the people; for both were equally deprived of it by the Medici. But the patricians wanted it only for themselves; while the people, more ignorant even than the nobles of the real nature and meaning of civil liberty, wanted to share with them the power and privileges in which they deemed it to consist. It was the old, old story. The problem was to use the brute power of the masses as a cat's-paw for drawing the chesnuts of power, place, and profit out of the Medicean fire. But the cat was in this case a tiger, with whose paws it was considerably dangerous to trifle, especially as the Florentine public was quite sufficiently versed in the

A.D. 1527. mysteries of political life to be fully awake to the danger of being tricked, and vigilantly suspicious of the slightest symptom of treason to the popular cause.

The brute force of the masses, however, played on this occasion a less important part than is usually the case in similar circumstances. For the contemporary historians agree in the opinion that the Cardinal of Cortona had quite sufficient military force within the city to have quelled all revolt by the strong hand, if he had possessed the courage and the promptitude to use it.* Much, therefore, depended on cowing and frightening this man, who was, according to all writers, utterly inefficient and incapable. He had already committed a serious error in permitting the Great Council of citizens to assemble in the grand hall of the *Palazzo Pubblico*. Their tone at once became ominously menacing. And when the Cardinal, alarmed by it, would have made some feeble attempt at opposing to their growing violence a military force, he found that the troops absolutely refused to act without receiving their arrears of pay in ready cash. The Cardinal sent for the city treasurer, who was in fact a mere deputy of Filippo Strozzi. For the great capitalist and loan contractor held that office in Florence as well as in Rome. This deputy had by private order from Strozzi deposited the public chest with its contents in the house of Lorenzo Strozzi, Filippo's *Piagnone* brother; whereupon the cashier told the Cardinal that he had no money in hand. The Cardinal governor maintained that there must be funds in hand. High words ensued; and the treasurer "made a ribald gesture at the Cardinal, saying, 'take that!' and then went off to Lucca." Honest Varchi reprobates the brutality of the act in no measured terms, and gibbets the cashier, "whose name was Francesco del Nero, nick-

* Segni, Storie Fiorentine, lib. i. vol. i. p. 13, edit. Milano, 1805.

named the Crà del Piccadiglio," as "the most irreligious and sordidly avaricious man in Florence." * A.D. 1527.

Bacio Valori, a firm partisan of the Medici, counselled the insulted Cardinal to arrest Niccolò Capponi at once. And Count Piernoferi da Montedoglio, the captain of the guard, advised him to put his hand in his own amply filled purse; declaring that if he would come forward with only twenty thousand crowns for the soldiers, he would undertake to put down all disturbance, and hold the city for the Medici against all opposition. But the Cardinal was too timid to follow the first, and too avaricious to accept the second of these counsels.† So, while the citizens were openly assembling in defiance of him under his nose, and the leaders of the evidently imminent insurrection were sitting in secret conclave, he with the two young Medici, Alessandra and Ippolito, now lads of sixteen, in his charge, was sitting helpless in the Palazzo Medici waiting for some favourable turn, the principal hope of which hung on the message he had sent to Filippo Strozzi.

Such was the state of matters in Florence when the lady Clarice arrived, and took her place at the council-board of the insurgent nobles. It was arranged that she should wait on the Cardinal at the Palazzo Medici the next morning. And the minute account which the historians, Varchi and Segni, have given of the lady's visit to the then occupiers of her ancestral home, shows abundantly that no better agent could have been selected for completing the poor Cardinal's panic, and absolutely frightening him out of the city.

When she arrived in her litter the next morning at the Medicean palace,—that magnificent pile of building, which is now known as the Palazzo Riccardi, and which everyone who has been in Florence will remember at the bottom of

* Varchi, ed. cit., vol. i. p. 170. † Segni, ed. cit., vol. i. p. 13.

A.D. 1527. the Via Larga,—Ippolito with his tutor, the Cardinal Ridolfi, met her on the stairs and conducted her to the Cardinal governor, who received her in the room next the chapel;—a magnificent saloon, now cut up by partitions for the convenience of some of the many offices, which in these days are harboured in the grand old palace, and of which only the gorgeously gilded and richly moulded ceiling remains to testify the former splendour. The Cardinal, trusting that she came to reinforce him, and not his enemies, rose to receive her with every mark of courteous welcome. But Clarice very quickly undeceived him.

"My Lord! my Lord!" cried she, "to what a pass have you brought us!" In the midst of her anger and violence the lady was politic enough, it will be observed, to affect to consider herself as a Medici, a sharer in the present troubles of the family. As such she would naturally have more influence over the governor. "Do you think," she continued, "that such conduct as this is in any way similar to that which my ancestors were wont to practise?"

Varchi assures us that he has been particularly careful to give the exact words she used; because it had been said that she had abused the Cardinal and the two young men with grossly injurious and unbecoming language, which was not the case. It would seem, however, from what follows, that the old writer had a tolerably large notion of what might be considered becoming, under the circumstances, in the mouth of an angry lady.

"Her ancestors," she continued, "had been powerful in Florence, because such had been the will of the citizens. They had on more than one occasion absented themselves from the city in obedience to the popular will, and had returned, when it had pleased the people to recall them. Such in her opinion should be their conduct now. It was evidently necessary to conform themselves to the condition

of the times, seeing the condition in which the Pope found himself. As for you," she continued, turning to the young men, "trust me, you had better provide for your own safety, which I have naturally more at heart than this Cardinal here." A.D. 1527.

"The Cardinal made many attempts to interrupt her, trying to get in a word of excuse," says Varchi; "but she never let him say a syllable, continually vociferating over and over again the same words." The historian Segni observes, that the lady was endowed with a wonderful power of tongue. Francesco Vittori, Niccolò Capponi, Bacio Valori, and several other citizens of note, who had come in,—some of them, it will be observed from the above names, being on one side, and some on the other, in the differences which were dividing the city,—tried hard to interpose between the eloquent dame and the overwhelmed Cardinal; and there was a good deal of confusion, in the midst of which the report of a shot was suddenly heard. It was supposed afterwards that it had been fired by Prinzivalle della Stufa, the same hairbrained young man whose silly attempt at a conspiracy in favour of the Medici in 1512 has been mentioned. But what his purpose was on the present occasion is not clear. At all events, it had the effect of breaking up the meeting; and Clarice retired to the neighbouring house of the Ginori.

Thence she immediately wrote to her husband, urging him to come on to Florence without delay; telling him that everything was going on admirably; and that his presence only was wanted to complete the work. She did not mention in her letter the incident of the shot fired; either not thinking it of any importance, or else knowing her husband well enough to fear that it might awaken his "prudence" to a greater degree than was desirable. The circumstance, however, had induced her to send her

A.D. 1527. children, who were with her in Florence, out to a villa belonging to Strozzi, called "Le Selve," near Signa, on the road to Pisa. And it so chanced, that their father coming up thence to Florence, met them on the road with their tutor. Inquiring from them the reason of their quitting the city, he heard the story of the shot which had broken up the meeting in the Palazzo Medici; whereupon the prudent banker immediately stopped short, and determined not to venture into the city that night, but to sleep at a place called Legnaia, about two miles on that side of it. The next morning, however, having been reassured by several of the party who went out to meet him at Legnaia, he ventured to come on to Florence, where he was received with the utmost marks of respect and welcome. We have the detailed account of these events from three contemporary historians, honest, simple, liberty-loving Varchi; respectable, grave, scholarly Segni; and Lorenzo Strozzi, the consistent radical and disciple of Savonarola. And it is worth observing, that no one of these writers, in recording how the great statesman and financier sent his wife among dangers which he would not face himself, and from fear for his own person hesitated to rejoin her, even when pressingly summoned by her, manifests the slightest notion that he is telling anything at all derogatory to the character of the great man whose deeds he is narrating. On the contrary, all this excessive care to keep his own proper person out of the reach of possible danger, only affords these writers the occasion for more of the eternal laudations of his "prudence."

Filippo Strozzi was met at the city gates and escorted to his own palace by a large body of the leading men in Florence. He found his house full, says Varchi, of citizens eager to welcome him to the city, and learn the line of conduct he was disposed to adopt. After a short council held in an inner room with the principal members of his

family and political connections, it was decided that he should at once wait on the Cardinal governor at the Palazzo Medici; and that he should do so as on an ordinary occasion of a simple visit, unarmed, and accompanied only by his brother Lorenzo. Filippo hesitated much, says Lorenzo, before he would consent to this, fearing that the Medici might very possibly conceive that his death at the present conjuncture would greatly tend to crush the insurrectionary movement, and secure their own position; and that it would be a very easy matter to dispatch him when he was in their hands, and in their own house. Varchi too, it is fair to mention, evidently considers that the step was not without danger from this cause. Strozzi trusted much, however, he says, to the persuasion that the Cardinal Passerini was too "cowardly" to murder him thus. A.D. 1527.

Filippo opened the interview by asking for information respecting the state of things in Florence, pretending to be wholly ignorant of all that had happened, as one just arrived from a distance. The Cardinal of Cortona apparently had not the face to pretend that he believed a word of all this. But young Ippolito, taking it all as simple fact, began to tell Filippo the whole story; how infamously the city was behaving,—how sadly precarious their own present position was,—how greatly in danger the whole fabric of Medicean ascendancy. He complained bitterly of the conduct of Clarice since she had arrived in Florence, pointing out to her husband how unnaturally she, a Medici, was behaving in thus turning against her own kin, and siding with strangers to her blood. He said that it was entirely owing to her intrigues and violence, that they had consented to allow the Great Council to meet and occupy itself with revolutionary projects. But, he added, that now that Filippo had come, it would be easy to undo all that, if only he were disposed to stand by them, and exert himself in their cause in earnest. He concluded by

A.D. 1527. reminding him that the day would assuredly come when Medicean gratitude would give him abundant cause to congratulate himself on having helped them in their hour of need.

Strozzi replied with the utmost affability and kindness. He expressed great sorrow for all that had occurred in the city, and especially declared himself pained by the ill conduct of Clarice. Had she not been a Medici, he said, "he would have so reprimanded her in public, and administered such a chastisement in private, that it would have gone hard with her." But, added he, with a sigh, the real fact was, that Clarice, feeling herself, as one of their blood, to be far superior in condition to himself, he unhappily had not that amount of control over her that could be wished. Finally, prudent Filippo promised to hasten immediately to the Great Council then sitting, and to see how far it might be possible to guide the popular will in such a direction as they desired.

Strozzi in truth did proceed forthwith to the hall of the Great Council; and found there, as of course he had intended to find, that unfortunately things had already gone much too far for it to be safe to attempt then to reverse the decisions which the citizens had come to. His first care was to send a message by a trusty agent to the captain of the guard, to the effect that his services were no longer required at the *Palazzo Pubblico*, and that he might withdraw his troops. Then he hurried back to the Palazzo Medici, and communicated to the Cardinal and the two young men the unsuccessful issue of his endeavours; adding that, inasmuch as it was too late for there to be any hope of setting aside the resolutions to which the Council had come, he had judged it in their interest by no means prudent to risk changing the favourable intentions of the citizens towards them, by advancing any obnoxious pretensions on their behalf. The "favourable"

resolutions on which the popular Council had decided were that the Medici should not be exiled, nor cited to give any account of the past; but were to be permitted to leave the city, or to reside in it at their pleasure, on the same terms as any other citizens. It is hardly necessary to observe, however, that no real intention or expectation existed that the latter alternative should or would be accepted. A.D. 1527.

To the two young scions of the Medici, who had been brought up to consider themselves as princes, with a strong sense of the dignity and privileges of such a position, and not a shadow of a conception of its duties and responsibilities, this indulgent permission to live as private citizens in the city they had looked to rule and to tax as despots, was gall and wormwood. But there appeared no present possibility of resisting; and, indeed, very significant symptoms began to manifest themselves, which indicated that the temper of the populace, despite the decree of the Great Council, was such as might make it imprudent for them to think of availing themselves of the permission to remain in the city on any terms. The Florentines, as Varchi says, "did not feel themselves to be free," as long as any of the detested race were yet in their old lair. They were bent on changing, as they significantly phrased it, "not the wine only, but the flask also." The tide of popular feeling was rapidly rising from hour to hour; and those who best knew Florence and its people, saw that it might very soon become a question whether the young heirs of the Medicean fortunes might be allowed to get out of the city in safety.

As for the Cardinal of Cortona, what with fears for his own safety, and a sense of the account he would one day have to render to Clement for the management which had allowed matters to come to this pass, he lost all presence of mind, and became even more incapable than ever of judging soundly either for others or himself.

A.D. 1527. Under these circumstances Strozzi went again to the Palazzo Medici, to point out to the young men the condition of matters in the city, and to urge on them the prudence of departing, while they were yet free to do so. It may well be believed that prudent, cautious Filippo was really anxious to get them away safely out of the city, and to avoid the danger from popular violence which menaced them. But it was difficult to bring them to any decision, and time pressed. Already their departure from the city in safety was a more doubtful and hazardous matter than it would have been an hour earlier, for the streets were beginning to be filled with people more or less violently hostile to them. The wind of the popular wrath was evidently rising, and threatened storm. The Cardinal and the young men had closeted themselves together in an inner room of the palace, promising that they would give Strozzi an answer shortly. But the minutes went on. Filippo was becoming uneasy, and more and more anxious as to the result; and still no answer came.

Strozzi became alarmed and angry; and as the best mode of hastening their deliberations determined to set Clarice on them.

"Clarice!" cried he to his wife, who was in the palace awaiting the result (it is the historian Segni who has recorded the incident and the words), "Clarice, it would be well that they should be quick about making up their minds in there; and it is for you to do whatever you deem best to hasten them."

The cautious banker did not wish that these princelings should have any harsh words to quote against him hereafter.

But Clarice no sooner got the above hint from her husband, than she went into the room where the old man and the two young ones were hesitating in an agony of indecision; and "with a face," says Segni, "full of in-

dignation and contempt, and with manly bearing, said, raising her voice so that it was heard by those outside: A.D. 1527. 'It would be disgraceful to me, who am a woman, to be thus incapable of coming to a decision to adopt or reject the course which has been proposed to you, as the safest, if not perhaps the most honourable. The time for consideration was, when you were so conducting yourselves as to bring things to this pass. It was not thus that my ancestors ruled and gained the affections of the Florentines. But you by your conduct show plainly enough, if it had not been known before, that you are not of the blood of the Medici.* And I say this, not of you only, but of Pope Clement, wrongfully Pope, and most righteously now prisoner in St. Angelo. The reputation of the family may go to the dogs for me! And for you, go out from a house, and from a city, neither of which belong to you either by right of birth or by your own merit. Go! and lose no time in setting about it!' "†

The lady Clarice had indeed, as the historian gravely remarks, a wonderful power of tongue.

The Cardinal and the two lads were, says Segni, "so overwhelmed by such words so spoken by such a woman," that they at once professed their willingness to go; only imploring that Strozzi would see them safe out of the town. This, however, was no longer a very easy task to undertake. The whole length of the Via Larga lay between the Medici palace and the city gate; and it was now closely thronged by a threatening crowd. However, Strozzi and Niccolò Capponi promised to ride with them to the gate. And though, as they passed along the street, more than one voice was heard, says Varchi, to mutter that the day would come when the Florentines would repent

* She alluded to the illegitimacy of the young men, and of Clement.

† Segni, vol. i. p. 17, ed. cit.

A.D. 1527. having allowed them to depart alive, they reached the gate unharmed, and rode that night, accompanied by Strozzi, to the Medicean villa of Poggio à Caiano, about ten or twelve miles from Florence on the road to Pistoia.

And thus was completed the third expulsion of the Medici from Florence, on the 17th of May, 1527.

CHAPTER V.

Strozzi at Pistoia—He accompanies the young princes to Lucca—Difficulty about the fortresses of Pisa and Leghorn—Ippolito outwits Strozzi—He is ill looked on at his return to Florence—Conduct of Clarice Strozzi at Florence—Niccolò Capponi suspected by the people—Strozzi's retirement to Lyons—Popular feeling towards the "Ottimati"—Mistake between liberty and equality—Position of Florence with regard to the powers of Europe—Policy proposed by Capponi—Character and conduct of the Italian army of the League—And of Francesco Maria della Rovere—Policy advocated by Capponi rejected—Hopeless position of Florence—Florentine government characterised by Varchi—By Cambi—Conduct of Venice—Dilemma in which Florence was placed—Pestilence in Florence in 1527—All accounts with the government since 1512 to be revised—Effect of this decree—Danger from Bourbon's army—Destruction of the city of Narni—Increasing virulence of the pestilence—Impruneta Virgin—Famine in Florence—Escape of the Pope from St. Angelo—Agreement between him and the Emperor—The Pope reaches Orvieto—Situation of that city—Account of the Pope's sojourn at Orvieto by English ambassadors—Clement's professions while at Orvieto — Factions in Florence — "Piagnoni" — Spiritual tyranny not tolerated — "Ottimati"—Renewal of the pestilence—Character of Capponi—His proposal to make Jesus Christ King of Florence—The proposition accepted, and put in execution.

Strozzi, having quitted the two young Medicean princes at Poggio à Caiano, went on to Pistoia in obedience to letters from the magistrates at Florence, which had been sent after him, requiring him to go thither for the purpose of appeasing a tumultuous outbreak that had arisen on the news of the Florentine revolution, between the members of the two hereditary factions which had disturbed Pistoia by their traditional hatred for so many generations.* He

* The Panciatichi and Cancellieri.

A.D. 1527. succeeded in accomplishing the object of his mission; and was returning towards Florence, when he met the two princes, with the Cardinal of Cortona, on the road. In reply to his inquiries, they said that they were going to Lucca. And Strozzi, in no hurry probably to return just yet to the seething and dangerous confusion of Florence, said that he would go thither with them. As it turned out, however, the "prudent" man was by this step running his head into much worse troubles than he would have in all probability encountered had he returned to Florence. For at Lucca letters from the magistrates were handed to him, telling him that the orders which the Medici had, before they were permitted to leave Florence, been compelled to send to the commandants of the fortresses of Pisa and Leghorn, enjoining those officers to give up the places held by them to the Republic, had been refused by them. The captains of these strongholds doubtless knew perfectly well that upon this occasion they were acting according to the wishes of their masters by disobeying their written orders. But it was important to the Republic to have those places in its hands; and the letters which reached Strozzi at Lucca enjoined him not to lose his hold upon the young princes until the fortresses were given up.

The commandant at Pisa had written that he would surrender the place if ordered to do so by Ippolito in person. The regular course, according to the military rules of the time, required that an officer entrusted with the safe holding of a garrisoned fort should under no circumstances obey any order to give it up unless accompanied by the "password" arranged between him and his superior. If this password were spoken, it would have been their duty to obey, speak the word who might. But the Cardinal of Cortona and the young men asserted that this password was in Clement's own keeping. Under

these circumstances, Strozzi took Ippolito with him from Lucca to Pisa, and suffered him to enter the fortress alone, for the purpose of persuading the commandant to give it up. After awhile the young man came out, declaring, as might have been expected, that the commander was obstinate, and absolutely refused to obey any order unaccompanied by the proper password. Strozzi, however, took Ippolito to task so severely, and pointed out to him so strongly the probability that he and his family might lose all they possessed in Florence, as well as the hope of ever returning thither, if he persisted in deceiving the Republic, that he at last confessed that the password was in the keeping of one Don Angelo Marzi, who was then in Lucca. And he wrote to that officer under Strozzi's direction an order to send him the password by the return of the messenger. When this was dispatched, the young man, pleading weariness, retired to his chamber to sleep. Strozzi then bethought him that it would be well to place a guard around the fortress, to make sure that no fresh force was surreptitiously introduced into it. But as he was too cautious to venture on giving the necessary orders without communicating with the governor of the city, he quitted the house in which Ippolito was "sleeping in his chamber" for the purpose of conferring with that authority. The governor gave his ready assent to the proposed step, and Filippo left him to take measures for its execution. But upon returning to his quarters, where he had left Ippolito, he learned that as soon as ever his back had been turned, the young man had made an end of his *siesta*, and had quitted Pisa. A.D. 1527.

Strozzi was bitterly mortified, as his brother admits, at having been thus foiled by a boy of sixteen. But the incident had worse results than the mere mortification of his vanity. Florence was, as he knew, in a very suspicious mood; and he foresaw that the popular voice would be

A.D. 1527. sure to accuse him of having connived at the escape of the Medicean prince, in the teeth of the order he had received not to let either of them go out of his sight till the fortresses had been given up.

When he returned to Florence he found, moreover, that Clarice had on her part been acting in a manner strongly calculated to offend the popular feeling, and to attract suspicion towards herself, and thus confirm the idea which had taken possession of the popular mind, that Strozzi was playing a false and double game. It cannot be doubted that Clarice was most sincerely in earnest in her hatred to Clement, and in her vigorous co-operation in the work of hunting out from the city the governor, and the two questionable Medicean scions under his protection. But it might well be questioned whether her zeal for their expulsion did not arise rather from their *not* being Medici, properly and duly such, than from their being so. It excited her extreme indignation to see all the Medicean honours and ascendancy in the hands of three illegitimate individuals, in the case of one of whom—Alessandro—the parentage on either side was very uncertain. Clarice herself was the legitimate daughter of Pietro, great-grandson of Cosmo, "Pater patriæ;" and that high-spirited and high-handed lady, who was not of a disposition to feel that her sex was any bar to her own inheritance of the family honours, had since the departure of the Medici and of her husband been behaving in a manner which had attracted much unfavourable observation.

No sooner had the Medici palace been left empty than she had transferred her residence thither, and gathered around her a knot of the leading men of the "Ottimati." Niccolò Capponi and some of the others were "visiting her there at all hours," says Varchi, "so that there was a constant coming and going of citizens about the house," which made much talk, and gave rise to sinister suspicions

amongst the people. Was the lady Clarice affecting to hold court there in the old palace? Was that house to be made once again the centre of the city? Niccolò Capponi, who had been chosen Gonfaloniere for one year by the Great Council, received more than one warning, that if he valued his own safety he would be less often seen coming and going through the doors of the Palazzo Medici. "Niccolò," said a friend to him once during that period, "you will get yourself torn to pieces one of these days, if you continue to frequent that house." A.D. 1527.

Such being the temper of the public mind, Strozzi, when he returned to Florence, was, as his brother assures us, well received by his fellow-nobles of the liberal party; but was looked upon with universal suspicion and aversion by the body of the people. The very fact indeed of his still standing well with the members of the "Ottimati" was calculated, in the temper of mind which was rapidly gaining ground in the city, to ruin his reputation more completely with the general public. Under these circumstances the prudent banker, looking not only to the present condition of things in the city, but also to the stormy and very doubtful future which was before it, judged that his wisest course would be to eclipse himself entirely for awhile. He withdrew therefore to his beautiful villa of Le Selve, and after awhile to the still safer and more distant retirement of Lyons, appearing no more on the troublous scene of Florentine history till after the final fall of the liberty of his country.*

Very shortly after the expulsion of the Medici, which had been effected in the manner described by the united force of the nobles and the people, the conviction that

* The remainder of his remarkable career may be found described at length in the "Life of Filippo Strozzi," by the present writer, from which work such portions as form a necessary part of the general history of Florence have been incorporated in the text.

A.D. 1527. the former were plotting to turn the revolution wholly to their own advantage, took complete possession of the public mind. "These fellows," said the popular orators,—it is Varchi who thus gives the pith of the democratic grumblings, which were agitating the people,—"these nobles are not striving for freedom of life and popular government, not a bit of it! What they want is the concentration of power in a few hands,—that which they call, with their Greek names, that they think we do not understand, an aristocracy. They have not turned out the Medici in order that we may be free, but only to serve their own greatness. These men have, as the proverb says, honey in their mouths; but they keep the razor ready at their girdle. What is this board of an hundred and twenty men, which they have appointed, other than the oligarchy, which they have always been driving at? Who does not know that the man, who won't have you as an equal and compeer, wants to have you his slave? It is quite clear, that if we would be men, and not the oppressed subjects of three hundred tyrants instead of one, we must be vigilant, and mark well what they are doing, and not attend to what they say."

Here we have the old ever-recurring mistake, which so fatally set the populations of mediæval Italy on a false track in their quest of liberty; and which, down to the failure of the last of their many violent struggles to escape from bondage, has ever prevented the kindred race to the north of the Alps from making any progress towards social freedom. It is the mistake of equality for liberty. "Who does not know, that the man who will not have you for a compeer, wants to have you as a slave," said the Florentine democrats. And here lies the root of the error. It was not good government that these men wanted and were determined to have, but a share in the privilege of governing;—not that the government should be so checked and

rendered responsible as to secure the cessation of abuses advantageous to the governors, but that such advantages should be shared among a more largely constituted oligarchy,—an oligarchy still, it must be always remembered, even if the power were shared by every inhabitant of Florence; for there was no question or idea among those municipal aristocrats of granting any measure of political freedom to their extra-mural subjects;—not that every individual should act in accordance with the dictates of his individual will to the utmost extent compatible with the like exercise of right by his neighbour; but that a much larger number, all perhaps of the inhabitants of Florence, should in a corporate capacity enjoy the privilege of tyrannizing over each in his individual capacity, as over the disfranchised population of the country districts and subject towns. A.D. 1527.

In this temper of the commonalty, "treason" was the accusation lightly conceived and readily bandied about, respecting this and the other of the "Ottimati" chiefs of the revolution. Of treason to the popular cause, as it was understood by the people, they were, no doubt, guilty every man of them. There is no question whatever, but that the intention of the whole party of the "Ottimati," was, as the popular leaders asserted, to keep in their own hands as closely as possible all that power and influence in the state which they had succeeded in taking from the Medici. But as popular suspicion always points to the delinquency which it most hates and dreads, rather than to that which is most logically consistent with the people's own theory of the desires and plans of the suspected, collusion with the Medici was the crime for which the popular eye was most vigilantly on the watch, and which most violently excited the popular wrath.

There had never been, however, any crisis in the history of Florence at which that larger knowledge of the move-

A.D. 1527. ments and intentions of foreign sovereigns, and that juster appreciation of the weight of the forces in action throughout Europe, which was far more likely to be found among the Ottimati than among their opponents, was more absolutely needed for the safety of the city. The position of the Commonwealth was in any case a most difficult and dangerous one. Up to the time of the recent revolution, which had so suddenly severed the connection between Florence and the Medici, the Republic had been dragged by Clement through all the mazes of his tortuous and ever-shifting policy. It had found itself altogether without will or act of its own, now the ally of the Emperor, and now again of the French king, with a perplexing rapidity of alternation. Clement's latest move had been formally to make alliance with the Emperor, even at the very moment that the Emperor's troops were on the point of sacking his city and making him a prisoner. This "alliance," strange as were the deeds that inaugurated it, was of course equivalent to making the French king Clement's enemy. The Florentines had been, as the Pope's subjects, up to the moment of this sudden change of the Papal policy, in league with France and the Venetians against the Emperor. Now Clement was the most dreaded and most dangerous enemy of Florence; while it was difficult to say which of the two great powers was most the friend or most the enemy of the Pope.

In this strange and puzzling state of matters, what line of policy was Florence to adopt for her own safety and the preservation of her independence? The question was a sufficiently embarrassing one. Was the league with France which was in existence up to the moment of the revolution that separated Florence from Clement, or at all events up to the moment when the Pope broke it by his suddenly-made alliance with the Emperor's viceroy, to be maintained for the sake of protection from the lawless army at that

moment engaged in pillaging Rome? Or was Florence to seek a defence against the vengeance of the Pope and the Medicean party by taking the side of the Emperor, who was to be supposed to be the Pope's enemy, despite the terms recently made between the Holy Father and the Viceroy, inasmuch as the former was held in durance by him? It would seem to be clear that the safest policy for Florence would be to side in any case with that one of the two great powers which was the Pope's enemy. But it was extremely difficult to say which this was, and still more, which of the two was most likely to be so a month later. A.D. 1527.

Niccolò Capponi, in a long speech preserved by the historian Varchi in the third book of his history, characteristically advocated a middle course. There is every reason to believe that Niccolò Capponi was an honest man, as men went in that time and country, and that he was anxious to take what to the best of his judgment he believed to be the safest course for his country. But he was essentially a weak man; "not the bravest man in the world," says Varchi, and liable not only to be frightened, but to be over persuaded into vacillation ruinous to the policy which he wished to support.

He urged the Great Council to forbear from committing themselves to an alliance with either of the powers which divided Europe, and would doubtless shortly be again in arms. He would have had the Republic cautiously abstain at the same time from aught that could give umbrage to either party, and meantime make such active use of the present momentary lull in the European tempest by strengthening itself with arms and troops, as to become an ally worth bidding for by either of the contending parties. He pointed out justly enough to the citizens, who seem to have formed a very high idea of the English king's power, and of the assistance to be expected from

A.D. 1527. him, the very small foundation which existed for any such hope. And it is curious to find the "divisos orbe Britannos" still spoken of in much the same terms as Capponi's ancestors would have used some fifteen hundred years before. "To all hopes of assistance from such a quarter," says he, "I answer in the first place, that even supposing the King of England wished to help us, he is so far off and so separated, not only from Italy, but from the whole world, that he could have no power of doing so; and in the next place, that the King of England cares as much for our liberty as we care for his." As to Francis and an alliance with him, he argues, that assuredly more was to be feared from the anger of the Emperor, should Florence take part against him in a quarrel which in no wise concerned her, than could be hoped from the King of France, attentive only to his own interests. Finally, he addressed himself to those who thought that Florence might be in danger of an attack from the forces of the Italian league under Francesco Maria della Rovere, if she should decline to remain a member of the confederation. This army, as has been seen, had in truth done but little. It had indeed stood between Florence and the invading army under Bourbon, but had not been called upon to strike a blow in her defence, because the invaders had moved off southwards towards Rome, which latter city the forces of the league had made no attempt to protect either before or after the fatal 6th of May. The historian Segni* declares that the spectacle of their utter inactivity was the worst aggravation of the sufferings of the Romans, and of the unhappy Pope's misery during his imprisonment in the castle of St. Angelo. Indescribable horrors were being perpetrated in Rome. The soldiery who occupied the city, enervated by wallowing in every lawless excess, and

* Vol. i. book i. p. 30, ed. cit.

disorganized by the total absence of all discipline, had been little capable of resisting an attack. Yet the Italian army, thirty thousand strong, besides artillery and three thousand cavalry, and well supplied with all the apparatus of war, had made not the smallest attempt to relieve the city; but after mocking the hopes of the unfortunate Clement and his miserable subjects by hovering on the neighbouring hills for a month, quietly moved off at the end of that time, and left the Pontiff and Rome to their fate. Francesco Maria della Rovere, their leader, had the reputation of a brave man and a skilful general. It was, however, hardly perhaps to be expected that a Della Rovere should be very earnest in his efforts to succour a Medici in his need. The injury done him by Leo X. in forcibly dispossessing him of his Duchy of Urbino, in order to bestow it on that Pope's nephew Lorenzo, was too gross and too recent to be easily forgotten or forgiven. But let his motives for inaction have been what they may, it is impossible to regard his conduct upon this occasion, either as a soldier, as a patriot, or as a man, without reprobation. And even Clement's enemies in Florence seem to have felt that an Italian general who could look calmly on while an Italian city, and that city Rome, was being plundered and outraged by barbarians, held out as little inducement to any party to trust to him for protection as to fear his hostility. Capponi evidently thought that his extraordinary inaction had been caused by mere cowardice.

A.D. 1527.

"As if," he cries,* "it were not well known that these troops are more terrible to peasants than to soldiers, and are better skilled in robbing farms than in taking fortresses! Have we not seen them readier far to plunder and devour the towns which receive them, than to assault and take those which resist them? Have they not proved

* See his speech in the Council as preserved by Varchi.

A.D. 1527. themselves, in a word, neither willing to defend their friends nor able to injure their enemies?"

There can be little doubt that the line of policy urged on the Republic by Capponi was upon the whole the best and wisest that could have been adopted by them. The citizens listened to his speech with attention, and at its conclusion gave him their applause;—but recorded their votes for his opponents. And it was determined to renew the league with Francis and to defy the Emperor. That vote sealed the fate of Florence.

Not that there is any good reason to suppose that a contrary decision upon that occasion, or indeed any line of conduct which could have been adopted, would have permanently secured Florentine liberty and independence. It perished, indeed, by the hand of Charles, in pursuance of the conditions of the right royal bargain made between him and Clement. The Emperor had a principle to carry out. The Pope had a vengeance to gratify. Both had to find princely and "honourable" positions for their children; the former for his bastard daughter,* who was to be duchess, and the latter for his bastard son, who was to be duke of the sacrificed city. For the sake of these motives Florence was besieged and taken. But would the forbearance of these imperial and priestly tyrants have permanently changed its destinies? Was there at that time any possibility of a well-ordered free government in Florence? Did the to be or not to be a nation of freemen hang trembling in the scale while Capponi harangued, and the Florentines applauded one opinion and voted for another?

* The main point in this infamous bargain concluded between Clement VII. and Charles V., at Barcelona, on the 29th of June, and ratified by those potentates in person, at Bologna, on the following 5th of November, 1529, was that Margaret, the illegitimate daughter of the Emperor, should marry Clement's (probable) son, Alessandro.

The student of their history will probably feel himself compelled to the conclusion that there was no such possibility in the case. Divine wisdom itself, we are taught, could promise the preservation of a community only on the condition that a certain given minimum of human worth could be found in it. And it may be very safely assumed that no combination of circumstances will ever be contrived by human wit, so skilfully arranged, or so fortunately falling out, as to accomplish that result, where that required condition is not complied with. A.D. 1527.

Florence had not as yet undergone that long course of purposed and calculated demoralization under its Medicean princes, and of depressing and leaden despotism under those * of the house of Lorraine, which is reasonably enough referred to as the excusing cause of the incapacities and shortcomings of her present generation of citizens. The days of her freedom were not yet so distant in the past, as to give room for tyranny's ever ready plea, that slavery had fitted them to be only slaves. Yet, even then, while a Florentine statesman characterised an Italian army in the bitter language quoted above, a Florentine contemporary historian speaks as follows of his country's statesmen and prospects.

"In a republic ill-ordered and corrupt to the last degree, as that of Florence was in those days," says Varchi, "it is nearly impossible that men of worth and capacity should ever arise. But if any such should be produced, they will be subjected to such an amount of envy and persecution, that either their natures will become changed and embittered by indignation, or they will be forced into exile, or hunted to a miserable death. So that it was about equally impossible for a republic so governed to maintain itself and succeed, as for an utterly wrecked ship, when

* Always with the honourable and ever-memorable exception of the reign of Peter Leopold.

A.D. 1527. buffeted by violent and contrary winds, to reach its harbour in safety."

Another contemporary writer,* speaking of the legislation of the same period, declares that the folly of it was such as could only have been committed by men who had lost their wits by the judgment of God.

But however true it may be, that the social condition of Florence at the period in question, was such as to offer but small probability of a prosperous issue to its renewed attempt at self-government, even under the most favourable circumstances, it must be admitted that those with which it had actually to contend, were in no ordinary degree difficult and disastrous. The secular quarrel between the imperial and papal power, by favour of which Florentine liberty had risen, and in a certain rough way had thriven, was about to come to an end; and that under circumstances especially unfortunate for Florence. For the Pontiff who was about to close this long disagreement discovered at last to be for the interest of neither potentate, was precisely one who had a claim (though not a right) to authority in Florence. The foreign policy on which the city had determined, made Francis their ally and Charles their enemy; the one sure to abandon them the first instant that it should appear to him in the least degree convenient to do so; the other equally sure not to forget the offence offered to him. The Venetians, too, who were included in the league, and who might have done much, showed themselves from the beginning very little inclined to incur any of the risk that a more active support of its professed objects would have entailed on them. There was little love at any time between the haughty oligarchy of the Queen of the Adriatic and the turbulent burghers of Florence. But it is very clear that on this

* Cambi, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxii. p. 315.

occasion the former, with their wonted sagacity, misdoubted from the first the upshot of the league with France, and of the struggle in which Florence by the expulsion of the Medici had engaged herself. The grave and reverend Signors of the Venetian Senate were warned by too keen an instinct of the approaching fate of the falling house, not to keep themselves at a safe distance from the walls. A.D. 1527.

On the other hand, if the Commonwealth had essayed to make a friend of Charles V., that course, though it might have spared the city that last fruitless struggle, with its accompaniment of misery, ruin, bloodshed, and gradually closing-in despair, would not assuredly have availed to prevent the mutually advantageous bargain struck between the Emperor and Clement. Still less would any measure of submission to Clement have availed to that end. The object the Pontiff had in view was consistent, the same now as it ever had been; and that object—the great, the paramount object of his life—was entirely and most satisfactorily attained by the arrangement in question. No! the policy recommended by Capponi was the best,—the only one that offered a shadow of hope. But then for the execution of it, it needed many virtues which the Commonwealth had not. It needed, above all, union, mutual confidence, and a much larger measure of self-reliance than the Florentines possessed. It needed also high courage, and a determination to sacrifice all rather than yield. But in the face of all that Florence did and suffered during the agony of her last struggle, it would not be fair to enumerate these among the virtues which she had not. She did show an example of heroism, and of unbending resolution under extreme suffering, that merited a better fate. But it was then too late; and was of no avail, mainly because, even at that extreme moment, she could not learn from all her past experience to trust the supreme power and autho-

A.D. 1527. rity to one of her own citizens, rather than to a hireling and traitorous stranger.

Meantime the aspect of matters within the walls began to be even yet more gloomy than the prospect of the political horizon. The plague broke out in the summer of 1527, and rapidly increased to an alarming degree. An enormous festival in honour of the Holy Virgin had been organised in Florence in the June of that year, as a scheme for persuading her to help the Commonwealth out of its political troubles. The narrow streets of the city, wholly undrained and very imperfectly ventilated, were packed on a burning day in June with a closely-wedged throng, bent on mixing amusement with devotion in the manner usual with the pleasure-loving populations of the South on their days of religious observance. And there were not wanting citizens irreligious enough to attribute the spread of the pestilence to the thick crowding of the city on the day of the Holy Virgin's festival. Be that how it might, the deaths in July and August were a hundred and fifty a day in a population of about sixty thousand.* By death and by flight the city became so empty, that it was found difficult to get together a quorum of the Great Council, to which the citizens had so eagerly thronged a few months previously. And a law was passed forbidding any head of a family to quit the city, and commanding all those who had done so to return.

It was altogether a miserable commencement of the restoration of liberty and self-government so exultingly inaugurated. Yet the pestilence itself is declared by the same historian† to have been of use in checking a still greater evil. The old, profound, and ineradicable party hatreds manifested themselves with renewed violence and bitterness. Day by day the legislation of the party in

* Varchi, book iv. vol. i. p. 281, ed cit. † *Ibid.*

power—the *Ottimati*—abandoned the mask of moderation and impartiality, and assumed the character of partisan persecution. Florence was threatened with a reign of terror. A measure adopted at this time by the government is curiously illustrative of some features of the social condition of the epoch, both by its own nature, and by the violent sensation it caused throughout the city. A commission was appointed to examine all accounts between individuals and the Commonwealth from 1512 to the present time, a period, that is to say, of fifteen years, with a view of recovering any sums unduly withheld from the treasury. The members of this board were to be paid by a percentage on the sums recovered by their labours. It might seem that, under any tolerably honest and regularly-conducted executive, an order to pay up all arrears of taxes would be a simple matter enough. But in Florence the consciousness of evasion, peculation, and corruption, joined to the matter-of-course certainty of injustice and partiality in the members of the commission, thus bribed to make, if they could not find, a case against the obnoxious adherents of the fallen regime, caused a dangerous terror among a large class of the citizens. A.D. 1527.

But now the over-riding dread of the pestilence, which grasped all vengeances in its own impartial hand, and threatened to enforce a peace after its own fashion by producing a solitude, tended to remedy these evils. Men cowered beneath the vengeance of nature, and for awhile forgot their* own.

Another cause also contributed at the same time to draw the citizens together, and induce them to suspend, if they could not abandon, their animosities. But this also was nothing better or nobler than another common fear. About the middle of July the bandit army, which since the

* Segni, book i. vol. i. p. 48.

A.D. 1527. beginning of May had employed itself in pillaging Rome, at length moved forth from the ruined city. Avenging pestilence had declared its presence there also. Generated by the putrefaction of the unburied dead, and by the infinite filth and licentiousness of the soldiery, it had penetrated within the castle moats and barriers, and approached even the sacred person of the Pontiff; as Segni, who seems to think that in such a case the laws of nature might be expected to have been suspended, writes with horror. In Rome everything consumable had been consumed. And the destroyers, like the loathsome locust-cloud, which passes onward only to leave a plague-smitten desert behind it, looked around them for fresh prey.

Every neighbouring city trembled. The Italian army was on the alert—to prevent the distance between them and the enemy from being lessened.* So far were they from any attempt to protect their country, that they carefully followed each movement of the enemy by a march in the opposite direction! The city of Narni was the victim selected by the destroyers. Resistance was undreamed of. Hope of help there was none. And a slaughter so indiscriminate and universal ensued, that when, after consuming everything, the ravaging horde once again moved on, they left an utterly uninhabited desert behind them, where a populous city had existed but a month before.

Whose turn was to come next? Florence might well turn pale, and be scared awhile from her own suicidal broils and hatreds. Within the walls of the city, and among the large population inhabiting the thousand villas and hamlets which so thickly studded the lovely hills around it, the pestilence was raging with still increasing violence; and the prospect of the future became day by day darker and more discouraging. The mortality in-

* Varchi, book iv.

creased during the autumn months to three and four hundred a day.* Private business, as well as public affairs and political dissensions, were at a standstill. The town was rapidly assuming the appearance of a deserted city; and the frightened government found it absolutely necessary to resort to extraordinary sanitary measures of some kind. The great procession in honour of the Annunziata Virgin had turned out altogether a failure. Everything had been going from bad to worse since that notable second day of June. The Annunziata either would not or could not help them. It was therefore determined to have recourse to *another* picture of the Virgin;—the celebrated Black Virgin of Impruneta, whom we have seen so frequently invoked in difficult crises of the history of the Commonwealth. "To THIS mother of God," says the grave and erudite Segni, "our city has never publicly applied in vain, in whatever extremity of distress. It is no light or silly thing which I am here affirming," continues the historian, with a curious consciousness that his assertions might appear such to some of his readers; "for in time of drought she ever sent rain; in periods of flood, she has restored to us fine weather; from pestilence she has removed the poison; and in every most grievous ill she has ever found its appropriate remedy."† So the Impruneta Virgin was brought to Florence. All the magistrates, barefooted and in mourning, received her at the gate of the city, and carried her in solemn and very sad procession to the church of the Servites. A.D. 1527.

Forty thousand citizens had died in the month of November.‡ But the never-failing Virgin of Impruneta

* Segni, vol. i. book i. p. 49. † *Ibid.*, p. 43.

‡ Cambi, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxii. p. 332. This number is doubtless intended to include the suburban district, as well as the city. When Segni speaks of three or four hundred a day, he speaks of the city only.

A.D. 1527. prevailed on this occasion also. For with the coming of the cold weather, the sickness began to abate. And thus the faith of the Florentines in their charm was more than ever confirmed. Still after long drought an appeal to the Black Virgin is found to be followed by rain; still fresh instances confirm the experience of centuries, that her influence ever causes extraordinary floods to yield before returning fine weather. Is it mere trifling to record such folly? Is it not rather true, that few human matters are more worthy of note than such popular belief in juxtaposition with the Lucretian unbelief of princes, cardinals, and pontiffs?

But Florence was, nevertheless, far from being at an end of her troubles. The plague was followed by a scarcity, which nearly approached to a famine. Devastated and almost depopulated fields produced no food. Obstructed and interrupted communications contributed to raise the market price of everything. Cambi has placed on record a list of prices paid in Florence during that terrible winter.* Bread seems to have been more than double its present price, taking into consideration the relative value of money; and the majority of the articles named reached a yet higher value. Many deaths occurred from starvation;—a thing that had not before been seen in Florence, even at the time of the terrible famine in 1346.

Thus sadly with present misery and very gloomy prospects for the future was the year 1527 closing at Florence, when tidings reached the city of an event which threw the citizens into fresh alarm, and very seriously complicated the position of the Commonwealth.† This was the escape of the Pope from St. Angelo, and his safe arrival at Orvieto; which he reached two hours after nightfall on the 8th of December, weary, worn in body and mind; and in such

* Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxii. p. 332.

† Varchi, vol. i. book v. p. 354, ed. cit.

poor and miserable guise that "he seemed," says Segni,* apparently unconscious of the satire latent in his words, "one of those Pontiffs of the primitive Church, who, despising and abandoning the pomps and gifts of fortune, were persecuted by the tyrants and oppressors of the faith." A.D. 1527.

Clement had purchased his release from Charles V. (whose mourning for the act of his subordinates, which had caused the Pope's imprisonment, did not extend to the relinquishment of the profit to be made out of it) by assenting to all the hard and humiliating conditions imposed upon him by the pious and regretful conqueror. They included, among other minor points, the cession of Parma and Piacenza and other territory; and the payment of four hundred thousand crowns. Moreover, as it was wholly out of the Pope's power to pay such a sum immediately, he was obliged to give up into the irreverent keeping of heretic soldiers several cardinals and bishops as securities for the payment of it. And it was not till these unhappy and helpless hostages had twice narrowly escaped being hung by the soldiers, exasperated by the delay of the promised payment, that the money was at length raised by the sale of five Cardinal's hats, and a loan procured at ruinously exorbitant interest.

The unlucky Clement is severely censured by the Florentine historians for having consented to terms so humiliating. And it is intelligible enough, that it would have better suited the interests of Florence that he should have maintained the dignity of the Papacy by dying heroically in his prison in St. Angelo, had it been needful so to do, as a result of refusing the conditions proposed to him. A Gregory VII., or an Innocent III. might have preferred to incur anything the conqueror could inflict, rather

* Vol. i. p. 47, ed. cit.

A.D. 1528. than bend thus lowly before secular oppression. But Clement was formed of very different material. In his position, walled up in company with pestilence in the midst of his ruined city, while, worse and least endurable of all, Florence was escaping, perhaps for ever, from his grasp, it was not to be expected that he should act otherwise. Besides, promises come very cheaply to him who holds the power of the keys.

Yet, notwithstanding that his restoration to liberty was agreed on, Clement, misdoubting the intentions of his jailers, would not await the day appointed for it; but found means to elude the vigilance of his guards, less strict, it may be supposed, now that his liberation was settled, and preferred making his journey from Rome to Orvieto as a fugitive.*

The situation of the city thus selected by the hardly be-stead Pontiff as a place of refuge, is one of the most remarkable in Italy. It stands about half-way between Rome and Florence, in the midst of a volcanic region, which the successive operations of fire and water have tortured into the most strange variety of abrupt and picturesque forms. In this singular district, hill and valley are mostly separated, not as in smoother regions, by gentle slopes, but by riven precipices of wall-like rock; and Orvieto occupies a cliff-girt height, whose natural fortifications seem to mark it as the very spot for holding the world at bay. Reached at the present day only by the steep zigzag climbing of one well-engineered road, it is at every other point of its circumference almost wholly inaccessible. And before the existence of this modern road, the difficult bridle-path which approached the gate, was of course much more easily defensible. The irregular and shifting course of the wide marsh-bordered

* Varchi, vol. i. book v. ed. cit.

Paglia winds far below in the valley around the base of the perpendicular rocks which form city walls such as only nature can construct. A.D. 1528.

In this haven of rest the persecuted Pope, sick, and broken in body and mind, found at least personal security. But that seems to have been pretty well all that Orvieto was capable of affording him. And towards the close of his miserable residence there, he confessed to Gregory da Casale, Henry VIII.'s ambassador, that captivity at Rome was better than liberty at Orvieto. One of the letters written home by Gardiner and Foxe,* who had been sent to urge the Pope to annul Henry's marriage with Catherine, gives a lively picture of the condition of the city, and of the miseries of the Pope's life there. Having arrived without any clothes besides their travelling dresses,—

"We were compelled," they write, "to tary all that day and the next within the house, whiles our garmentes was at the making, wherin we founde very great difficulte, all thinges here being in suche a scarcite and derthe, as we thinke hath not been seen in any place; and that not only in victell, which can not be brought in to the towne in any great quantitie, by reason that al thing is conveyed by asses and mules; but also in oother necessaryes; so that cloth, chamblet, or such like merchaundises, which in England is worth 20*s.*, is here worth 6*l.*, and yet not to be had in any quantite; and had we not made provision for our gownes at Luke (Lucca), we must of necessite have goon in Spanish clokes, such as we could have borrowed of the poope's servaunts; wherin peradventure shold have been found some difficulte, forsomoche as few men here, so farr as we can perceave, have moo garmentes than one."

* State Papers of Henry VIII., vol. vii. p. 63.

A.D. 1528. Of Orvieto they write: "It may wel be called Urbs Vetus (such is the etymology by some assigned to the name), for every man in al langages, at his entre, wolde gyve it noon other name. We cannot wel tel howe the Poope sholde be noted in libertie being here, where hunger, skarsite, il favered lodging, il ayre, and many other incommodities, kepe him and all his as straitly as he was ever kepe in Castle Angel. It is *aliqua mutacio soli, sed nulla libertatis;* and in maner the Pope cowled not denye to Mr. Gregory, but it wer better to be in captivite at Rome thenne here at libertie. The Pope lieth in an olde palace of the bisshopes of this city, ruynose and decayed, where or we cumme to his pryvey bed chambre, we passe three chambres al naked and onhanged, the rofes faln downe, and as we canne gesse, thirty persons, rif raf and other, standing in the chambres for a garnishement. And as for the Pope's bed-chamber, al the apparel in it was not worth twenty nobles, bed and all."

Uneasily enough, beyond all doubt, lay in these days the head that wore the triple crown. And we may feel very sure, that not the least bitterly felt of all the humiliations of that miserable time was the presence of these ultramontane "barbarian" ambassadors to spy out the nakedness of the land.

In this wretched condition the humbled Pontiff was obliged to continue for nearly four months, "making profession to all Christian princes," says Segni,* "of no longer wishing or intending to meddle with wars or any other worldly affairs. Whether this were at that time his real feeling, or whether he assumed this tone, because he saw great difficulties before him in bringing his affairs to any prosperous issue, is uncertain. But having suffered infinitely in spirit, both on account of the ruin

* Storia Fiorentina, vol. i. book i.

of Rome, and far more still because of the loss of Florence, upon which he could at that time see small hope of again obtaining any hold, as well as from many other pains and sorrows he had undergone, he was then infirm both in mind and body." A.D. 1528.

But Clement's spiritual inclinations and abnegation of the world and its ambitions, if in truth they ever existed at all, endured hardly so long as the pious resolutions attributed to another spiritual personage. When the Pope got well, indeed long before he got well, his scheming plans and busy brain were thoroughly of the world, worldly, as they ever had been. While still in eclipse at Orvieto, he was heard swearing that he would never rest in holy ground if he did not succeed in recovering Florence before he died.*

These being indeed the truest, most abiding, and ineradicable sentiments of Clement's heart, Florence had good reason to feel that, from whomsoever else she might have to fear hostility, the Pontiff was her most dangerous and deadly enemy. Let him say what he might, every man in Florence knew full well that such was the case, though there was still a powerful party which desired that he might be successful in re-establishing the Medicean power over the Commonwealth. Clement, indeed, during these days of his humiliation and distress, did not cease to make protestations of the moderation and friendliness of his views with regard to the city. All he asked was that Florence should recognise him as a citizen,—or at least as a Pope;—that she should give up to him the child Catherine, the only legitimate remaining scion of his race, forcibly detained by the city;—and that the Commonwealth should abstain from imposing arbitrary and ruinous forced contribution on citizens who had no other fault save that of

* Varchi, vol. i. book v. p. 362, ed. cit.

A.D. 1528. being known to be his friends. This was all he asked of the Florentines. But these were the utterances of Clement when he was sick, and the citizens were not deceived by them.

It cannot be thought surprising, therefore, that the improvement in Clement's fortunes and position which permitted him to return from the exile of Orvieto to Rome, should have been felt in Florence to be a serious blow and grievous addition to the troubles and perplexities which harassed the citizens and their government. But, putting aside the "Palleschi" or Medicean party, there were, as has been already intimated, two strongly divided factions in the city, both at least professing to be equally hostile to Clement and the Medici.

These were the "Ottimati," or aristocratic whigs, and the "Piagnoni," or radical followers of the doctrines of Savonarola;—followers, many of them, of his political doctrines only, but a large body, and that probably forming the main strength and nerve of the party, enthusiastic and fanatical disciples of his religious creed also. The lofty aspirations and daring theories of the great Friar were far from having been burned out from the popular mind by the flames which had consumed that apostle's body twenty-nine years previously. Such growths are not to be burned out by such fires. The men in whose minds they were yet alive and vigorous were found principally, as might be supposed, among the ranks of the "Popolani,"—the plebeian portions of the social body,—but not entirely so. For in Florence in these days, as in times and places nearer at hand, there was a class of men who conceived that it might be useful not only to their political, but to their true spiritual interests also, to adopt as much of a popular and largely professing creed as could be made compatible with the respectabilities of society. Niccolò Capponi himself, who had recently been elected Gon-

faloniere by the influence of the Ottimati, was, though himself from natural temperament an essentially moderate man, either from conviction or policy, a professed admirer and follower of the Frate, and was much connected with the community of St. Mark, among whom his spirit still more especially survived. A.D. 1528.

The uncompromising and fiercely democratic republicanism of these "Piagnoni," and the practical earnestness of the enthusiasm with which they brought their religious theories to bear upon their politics, present many points of striking resemblance to the Fifth Monarchy men of our own revolutionary period. They resembled them in that strength of their convictions, and violence of their views, which rendered them at once a powerful and a dangerous body in the State. They resembled them also in the self-concentrated narrowness of conception which led them, as it has so led many another school of fanatics, to seek the establishment of a tyranny, less contemptible perhaps, but yet more intolerable, than that against which they protested.

For no really spiritual tyranny was ever yet, or ever can be, widely tolerated. Nature says too loudly, No! The tyranny of Rome has been tolerated because it is not in reality spiritual. She allies herself with all the conservative selfishness of human nature. She asks only a little falsehood—only conformity;—only demands that, if you are not her dupe, you should abstain from spoiling her game with others by proclaiming her fraud. On these terms she is content to leave you in peace. She will even invent herself all sorts of convenient subterfuges, under cover of which she may decorously refrain from troubling your life and habits. And the power of Rome exists only by favour of the renegade complicity of the thousands willing, for peace and comfort's sake, to be guilty of this misprision of felony against truth. Few careful readers of

A.D. 1528. history will question the assertion, that at no period during the last four hundred years has there existed a sufficient amount of real belief in the world to have kept Romanism in the position it occupies, had it been unsupported actively or passively by non-believers in its doctrines. It may be safely assumed that, even in those parts of Europe most hopelessly broken-in to the endurance of every kind of yoke, Rome would commit a suicidal error were she to attempt to lay on her flocks such a burthen as the Piagnoni sought to impose on their fellow-citizens.

Yet in their ranks was to be found nearly all the true manhood, the earnestness, the worth existing in the city; all the material, in a word, which, had it not been rendered valueless by an impracticable and overbearing fanaticism, might possibly have prepared a different future for Florence.

From the "Ottimati" little good was to be hoped. They were better informed; indeed, more capable of estimating and understanding the dangers and difficulties which threatened the Commonwealth in every direction, and rendered the prospect of securing its continued independence well-nigh hopeless. But success in attaining the objects they really had in view, would have been valueless to the rest of the citizens, and would infallibly have led to either fresh successful usurpation of the supreme power by some one family among them, or to a series of suicidal struggles, alternate proscriptions, and social dissolution. Several men among them were suspected by the people, not only of wishing to appropriate to themselves all the profit of the recent revolution of 1527, by the establishment of a close oligarchy,—an object, indeed, which could hardly be said to be a matter of suspicion, but was one rather of notoriety,—but of having secret sympathies with the Medici, and the former order of things. And the prevalence of such suspicions created yet

another element of difficulty and danger in the situation of the Republic. A.D. 1529.

There can be no doubt that in many cases such suspicions were well founded. But it was, in all probability, untrue and unjust to ascribe to such sympathies exclusively any tendency on the part of those who were at the helm of the State to come to some terms of adjustment with Pope Clement. The dangers which beset the city on all sides were too imminent for it to have been other than excusable for those who understood them, and on whom the responsibility of guiding the Commonwealth among them rested, to dread the consequences of irremediably alienating and exasperating the Pontiff.

In the spring of 1529, the pestilence again began to increase in virulence,* and no longer confined its ravages, as it had mostly done in the previous summer, to the poorer classes of the citizens. The pressure from scarcity of food was every day making itself more severely felt, and various sumptuary laws were passed † to restrain that recklessness of living which is so commonly found to manifest itself in times of general danger and distress, when to eat and drink since to-morrow we die, is apt to commend itself as the truest wisdom to the faint-hearted and foolish.

It would be difficult, indeed, to imagine a position of greater embarrassment than that of the ruler of such a city at such a time. And Niccolò Capponi was assuredly not the pilot to weather such a storm. His cautious sagacity saw only too clearly all the dangers of the situation. There are strong grounds for believing that Capponi was anxious to serve the best interests of his country, as he understood them. Yet it is probable that he was little sincere in endeavouring to carry out that policy, which was forced

* Cambi, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxxiii. p. 12. † *Ibid.*

A.D. 1529. on him by the bolder and more ignorant majority of the Council.

The same thing may with considerable confidence be said of a step taken by the Gonfaloniere that spring, no doubt for the purpose of conciliating the "Piagnoni," which surely was one of the most extraordinary measures ever adopted by a statesman in difficulty. But the proposal, and the reception of it by the citizens, are alike characteristic in a very remarkable degree of the Florentine temper and modes of thought, and of the feverish state of the public mind at that time.

There was a meeting of the Great Council of citizens on the 9th of February, 1529.* It was much more numerously attended than had recently been the case; for there were no less than eleven hundred citizens present. The Gonfaloniere rose, and in a long speech, which might have passed, says Varchi with something very like a sneer, for one of Savonarola's sermons, rehearsed a long list of providential mercies, for which Florence owed the greatest gratitude to God. Specially he recounted how, when recently they were menaced with destruction by the lawless followers of Frundsberg and Bourbon, "the divine mercy, moved by the prayers of certain pious persons of either sex in the city, had sent that destroying host to sack and plunder Rome and all its clergy" instead.† Passing thence to an alarming picture of the dangers then imminently threatening the State, and of the present lamentable condition of the people, he, in conclusion, suddenly threw himself on his knees before the assembly, crying aloud, "Mercy! mercy!"—to such good purpose, says Varchi sarcastically, that the whole assembly was moved to join in the same contagious cry.

* Varchi, vol. i. p. 361, ed. cit.

† Cambi, Deliz. degli Erud. Tosc., vol. xxxiii. p. 12.

It is the nature of such emotions to propagate and intensify themselves in crowded assemblies of men. The atmosphere of the council chamber became, as it were, charged with the religious fervour evolved from the excited nervous system of the eleven hundred councillors. And when they had been thus prepared for the reception of any monstrosity of fanaticism, the Gonfaloniere concluded his harangue by proposing that Jesus Christ should be forthwith elected and proclaimed King of Florence! A.D. 1529.

The proposition was received with enthusiasm; but no amount of exaltation could hurry these worthy guardians of constitutional liberty out of the habitual routine by which all the functionaries of the State were elected. So the pious councillors arose from their knees, and proceeded to hand about the ballot-boxes. "And of the eleven hundred of us councillors who were there in Council," says honest Cambi, "there were eighteen white beans of those who would not accept Christ for their king." * Varchi says that the dissentients were twenty. And Segni, in his life of Niccolò Capponi,† affirms that twenty-six adverse votes were given. "It is strange," observes the historian Pignotti, with an amusing accuracy of logical inference, "that no one objected to the vote on the ground that it necessarily subjected the Florentines to the jurisdiction of the Pope, as the visible Vicar of the monarch of their choice." ‡ And a commentator on Varchi suggests that in all probability this consideration did influence the dissenting minority. But it is more consistent with the ideas and habits of thought of that day, to suppose that the orthodox theory of the papal power never entered into their heads for an instant. That the great majority of the

* Cambi, *loc. cit.*

† Segni's life of Niccolò Capponi is printed at the end of the third volume of the previously quoted edition of his history.

‡ Pignotti, Stor. Toso., lib. v. chap. vii.

A.D. 1529. citizens should have altogether overlooked the possibility that their election of Christ might be held to involve any such consequence, is in any case another curious proof of the degree in which the bishop was altogether disregarded and forgotten in the temporal sovereign by the Italians of the sixteenth century.

The Abate Rastrelli, who speaks of Capponi's measure as an "atto di fina politica," declares that it was very successful in conciliating to him the minds of the people; and remarks with a sneer, all *abate* as he was, that "the Gonfaloniere was exceedingly intimate with the friars of St. Mark, and had thoroughly well learned from them, that the best way to quiet an ignorant populace, is to exhibit to them *the image of some saint.*" *

The measure was no sooner decided on, than it was ordered to be put in execution by placing an inscription to that effect over the great door of the *Palazzo Pubblico;* and by erecting "in the place," says Cambi, "which the cognizance of the King of France formerly, and more recently that of Pope Leo occupied, the arms of our King Christ."

And there the inscription recording this singular act of fanaticism may be seen to the present day.

* Rastrelli wrote a life of Alexander de' Medici, the first Duke of Florence, where the above remarks may be found.

CHAPTER VI.

Illness of Clement VII.—His letter to Charles V.—His recovery; and reconciliation with the Emperor—Florentine hopes of French aid—Correspondence between Niccolò Capponi and Jacopo Salviati—Capponi deposed from the Gonfaloniereship—Election of Francesco Carducci to that office—Signs of the approaching downfall of Florentine liberty—Position of the Papacy—New league between the Pope and the Emperor—Treaty of Cambrai—General league of despots against liberty—Divisions of parties in Florence—Florence sends an embassy to Charles V.—Fruitlessness of that step—Return of the ambassadors—Death of Capponi at Castelnuovo—His meeting at that town with Michael Angelo—Employment of the latter on the fortifications of Florence—His true patriotism—Rats begin to run from the falling house—Filiberto, Prince of Orange, general for the Emperor against Florence—By the Pope's desire he obtains Perugia from Malatesta Baglioni by negotiation—Baglioni chosen to be general of the Florentine forces—Infamous conduct of the Duke of Ferrara—The Impruneta Virgin brought to Florence—Measures for raising money—for victualling the city—for restraining disaffected provincial cities—Board of dictators appointed—Mischiefs arising from that provision—Applications for assistance to Venice—Pope Clement's reply to an envoy sent to him from Florence—Difficulty of communication between Florence and Venice—Disaffection within the city—Arrest of disaffected citizens—Execution of one of them—Venetian ambassadors' account of the firmness of the Florentines—Commencement of the siege of Florence.

In the early spring of that miserable year 1529, tidings reached Florence which, like a transient gleam of sunshine in a storm-laden sky, wonderfully raised the drooping spirits of the citizens, and seemed to promise that there might yet be a hope of escape from the perils which environed them. Clement soon after his return from Orvieto to Rome, in October of 1528, fell ill, and in the spring became so much worse, that he was almost given

A.D. 1529. over by his physicians. They attributed his malady to the intense bodily and mental suffering which he had undergone during his imprisonment in the castle of St. Angelo, and his subsequent miserable residence at Orvieto. He believed himself to be dying; and, faithful to the ruling passion for the aggrandizement of his family, he made, from his deathbed, as he thought, the boy Ippolito a Cardinal; and wrote the following letter to Charles V.—probably the most sincere he had ever penned—on behalf of Alessandro, whom he sent with it to the Emperor.

"If it is the pleasure of the divine Majesty," writes the apparently dying Pontiff, "to take me, his miserable servant, to himself, I recommend to your sovereign power this my exiled nephew, seeing that I am unable any longer to forward his interests by mine own forces. It is my earnest prayer that you will restore him to that station which he justly possessed, and which has been taken from him by the wrongful acts of others. Let your performance of this good deed serve as an atonement and recompense * for all that you owe to my dignity. I ask nothing further from you; and I give you my paternal benediction." †

The use of the phrase "nephew" in this letter is worthy of note. It is true that the word "nepote" is much more loosely used by the Italians, especially of that time, than its equivalent is by us. But it would seem to be beyond all probable limits of such vagueness of language for Clement to term Alessandro his "nephew," on the hypothesis that he was the son of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino. For his real relationship to the Pontiff in that case, leaving out of consideration the illegitimacy of both parties, would be that he was the grandson of the Pope's first cousin. But the phrase, a "Pope's nephew," was an almost recognised euphuism for a "Pope's son." And it seems

* "Reintegramento." † Rastrelli, Vita di Alessandro, p. 41.

more likely that Clement, thus writing, as he thought, from his deathbed, meant the Emperor to understand, what there is every reason to believe was the real truth, that the bearer of the letter of recommendation was indeed his son. Ippolito, as being the son of a first cousin of Clement, was nearer in relationship to him than Alessandro, supposing the latter to have been the son of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino. And Ippolito was moreover, though no paragon of excellence, a far more promising subject than the wholly worthless Alessandro. Why, then, was the latter chosen to be the representative of the family greatness and ambition, if it were not that he in reality stood nearer to the Pontiff? A.D. 1529.

A very confidently-affirmed report reached Florence in March, that the Pope was dead. And the rejoicing caused by the news in the city, says Varchi,* was beyond all belief. Venice also and many other places did not scruple to show their joy on the occasion. But when the tidings shortly came, that, instead of dying, the Pontiff had recovered, a deeper gloom than ever settled down upon the city. And the ill news was shortly followed by the yet more alarming intelligence that manifest signs were to be observed of a coming reconciliation between him and the Emperor. Such an event, the probability of which, as it now appears, it hardly needed any very profound political sagacity to foresee, was all that was wanting to render the position of Florence well nigh desperate.

The only remaining hope was in the alliance with France. And those who had succeeded in causing that line of policy to be adopted by the Commonwealth may have probably thought that the imminent reconciliation between the Pope and the Emperor was the justification of their opinion. It was yet on the cards that it might prove

* Op. cit. vol. i. p. 523.

A.D. 1529. to be so. France was still asserting her claim to the kingdom of Naples. But matters had been going very badly with the French armies in the south of Italy during the entire previous autumn. Under the command of the Marchese di Saluzzo they had been entirely defeated by the Imperialists under the Prince of Orange, on the 30th of August, 1528. The Maréchal de Lautrec, their previous commander, had died of the pestilence a few days before that fatal battle. The remains of the Bande Nere, those celebrated companies formed by Giovanni de' Medici, which had been sent by the Florentines under Orazio Baglioni as their contribution to the forces of their French ally, had at the same time been entirely destroyed. There was indeed little to be hoped from the protection of France under these circumstances. But the Commonwealth had yet to discover how utterly and hopelessly vain was their trust in French friendship or in French honour. We have now reached March, 1529. And for yet three or four months longer the befooled Florentines were able to delude themselves with the hope that their alliance with the French king might be the means of saving them from the Pope and the Emperor.

In the following month—the April of 1529—an incident occurred which, like a spark falling on gunpowder, threw all the city into commotion, and furnished an opportunity that enabled the sterner and more thorough-going republicans to cut away the last means of communication by which an accommodation with the Pontiff might have been yet possible. The excited and feverish state of the public mind in the city is strikingly indicated by the violent ebullition which the circumstance created. It cost the Gonfaloniere his place; and had it not been for a very general feeling of respect for the man, joined to his widely-spread family influence among the nobles, and personal interest among the Piagnoni, it would have cost him his life.

The general tendency of Capponi's mind and policy has been seen. Moderate and conciliatory by temperament, and allied by blood and by class associations, if not by friendship, with most of the aristocracy of the city, it had been his constant object to protect, as far as he could safely do so, the partisans of the Medici from the violent hatred of the popular party, and to moderate the line of conduct pursued by the city towards the Pope, so as to avoid exasperating him more than could possibly be helped, and to keep open at least a possibility of negotiation. Niccolò Capponi was not formed of the material from which martyrs are made, and had assuredly no intention of becoming one, either on the side of freedom or on that of tyranny. But there is every reason to think that his views of the policy most expedient for the city were judicious; and there are no reasonable grounds for stigmatizing him as a traitor, as some of the historians have done, or for doubting that he was anxious to serve the interests of his country by any means not involving too great a sacrifice of his own. But he was, from social position, from his antecedents, and from his temperament, exactly the man most sure to be hated and suspected by the leaders of a violent popular party, and least able to rule and guide the vessel of the state among the whirlpools caused by popular passions. A.D. 1529.

Now Capponi had maintained, with no other view it should seem than that above indicated, a correspondence with Jacopo Salviati, an adherent and family connection of the Pontiff,* who had remained near Clement's person, and was much in his confidence. On the 5th of April, 1529, there was a meeting of the Signory, at which the Gonfaloniere was strongly urged to resign his functions by the more thorough-going members of the government, who

* Jacopo Salviati had married Lucretia, a sister of Leo X.

A.D. 1529. deemed his lukewarm republicanism treason to the Commonwealth. He had fought them off during a long and stormy morning sitting; and when they met again after supper, he contrived to occupy the evening with the discussion of various despatches from the Commissaries and Ambassadors of the Republic. But as ill luck would have it, in taking these from his pocket, he drew forth with them a letter from one Ghiachinotto Serragli, a friend and agent of Salviati; and, without perceiving it, let it fall beneath the table.* Early the next morning he became aware of his loss, and hastily sent a messenger to the room in which the Council had met to look for it. The man found it, and was carrying it to the Gonfaloniere, when he chanced to meet Jacopo Gherardi, one of the Council most hostile to Capponi. He took the letter from the servant, saying that he would himself carry it to the Gonfaloniere, but had no sooner ascertained its contents than he communicated them to all the most violent members of the extreme republican party.

The most insidious reports were spread like wildfire through the town, and it became necessary that the Gonfaloniere should be tried for high treason. Gherardi urged that he should be put to the question by torture. But the majority of the Council rejected the atrocious proposition.

The letter which led to such disastrous consequences is given by Varchi, copied, as he says,† most faithfully word for word. It runs thus:

"MOST ILLUSTRIOUS, etc.—I have received your Excellency's letters of the 30th ult., and I perceive by them that two despatches of my letters have miscarried, and thus understand the reason of my not having heard from your Excellency for some time, at which I had been surprised.

* Pitti, Istor. Fior. apud Archiv. Stor. Ital., vol. i. p. 174.
† Storia Fiorentina, vol. i. p. 545, ed. cit.

I console myself by the knowledge that into whatsoever hands they may have fallen, they will be found to contain nothing adverse to your popular constitution. I earnestly beg that I may hear from your Excellency. But if by reason of press of business this is not possible, let Piero* write me a line, which will come to the same thing. The Pope has been to-day at Belvedere, and the fortresses have been given up; and the abbot of Farfa starts to-day for Bractiano. We shall see what will be the sequel. I have this day spoken with the Pope and with our friend,† and they could not be more favourably disposed than they are towards the liberty and popular government of Florence. I much wish to speak with your son Piero on an important matter; and I would advise that he should pass the frontiers secretly, lest he should be suspected of ill-doing, while in truth acting well. I hope, too, that he may bring with him some decisive determination, and that shortly; for time is pressing." A.D. 1529.

Paolo Giovio gives in his history a very different and far more compromising version of Serragli's letter. Giovio, however, as is well known, is an authority of very little weight on any subject. And Varchi, who has left a tract "on the historic errors of Giovio," says in it that the letter given by the Bishop of Como, as that received by Capponi, has little or no resemblance to the true one. But it is strange that Segni, who wrote his "Life of Capponi" expressly to defend and justify his political conduct, should say in it that Giovio's version of the letter is accurately correct. There is, however, I think, little doubt that Varchi's account is the true one. He wrote much nearer the time when these transactions occurred; and the letter, as given by him, is a much more likely one to have been written under the circumstances than that reported by

* Capponi's son. † Salviati.

A.D. 1529. Segni. The latter historian, moreover, has been guilty of an inaccuracy, which proves him to have written carelessly on the subject. In his Florentine history he says that Capponi received the letter on the 25th of March; while in his life of Capponi he says that it was written on the 4th of April, and received on the 14th.

It would seem difficult to find in this famous letter, as Varchi gives it, any evidence on which to base an accusation of treason, unless indeed the mere fact of corresponding with any adherent of the Pope was to be deemed treason. The truth probably was that Clement was deceiving Salviati, or, if not Salviati, at all events Capponi and the others, who were inclined to hope that the differences between him and the city might yet be composed, as to his plans and intentions for the future. It was quite in accordance with his character and usual policy to endeavour to recover the ground he had lost by making them believe that he was willing to accede to a very much larger degree of liberty than he ever intended to tolerate permanently. It cannot be denied, however, that those who thought it dangerous to treat with him on any terms had ample grounds for their opinion. But no choice was open to them save one between that risk and others which Capponi and his friends, rightly perhaps, deemed still more alarming.

The Gonfaloniere's life was with much difficulty saved. But he was deposed. And Francesco Carducci, a leader of the "Arrabbiati" or violent democratic party, and especially that portion of it opposed to the followers and religious teaching of Savonarola, was elected on the 17th of April, 1529. The new magistrate, though himself a violent man, and the leader of a party whose violence and rashness made it little fitted for guiding the Republic through the difficulties of the stormy times on which it was too evidently about to enter, was, it should seem, a man of integrity,

talent, and vigour. Such an appointment, however, was a new defiance to Clement. Both parties felt it to be so, and were convinced henceforward that arms alone could decide the question between them. A.D. 1529.

Abroad the drama was hurrying to its catastrophe. The fatal term of Italian as well as Florentine liberty was now near. It was the last sunset hour before the long night of three hundred years; and that sun went down in lurid blood-red clouds, and amid sinister portents. For Italy as well as for Florence, that "most republican of all republics," life and hope,—the hope of improvement, advancement, social, moral, and intellectual,—the possibility of generous aspirations to a nobler life, of good work to be done, and hardy, hearty virtues to be fostered in the doing of it,—all this was waning low for all Italy as well as for Florence. For Florence had been, with all its numerous and salient faults, the well-head of political life and social intelligence, whence, had time been allowed, the rest of the peninsula might have been civilized. Nothing but the total extinction of liberty could have secured to the Papacy three hundred more years of existence, at least in Italy. Its destruction, it is true, made no declared and recognised portion of the programme of any political party then extant. But there were signs of the times, and men's minds were moving in a direction which indicated clearly enough, or at least indicate to us, who are enabled to take a synoptical view of the field of action, that that most monstrous and most successful of all the engines ever invented for the depression of the many to the profit of the few, would not have been able to hold its ground much longer by the exercise of its own proper forces. Hitherto the Papacy had not only stood by its own strength, but had supported much else by its assistance. From that time forth it has existed only by the aid and permission of other tyrannies, whose patronage it has purchased by

A.D. 1529. killing the souls of nations, and thus rendering their bodies manageable by despots.

Much more, therefore, than the fate of Florence, more than the fate of Italy was sealed by the unholy alliance of Pope and Emperor, which trampled the life out of the most republican of republics. The new league between Charles and Clement was signed at Barcelona on the 29th of June, 1529. And its conditions might have sufficed to convince the Florentines that their Commonwealth was indeed doomed, and its last day at hand. The bargain struck between the spiritual and the temporal tyrant provided, as has been mentioned, that the Emperor's illegitimate daughter Margaret should be married to the Pope's illegitimate son,* Alexander, and that the liberty and independence of Florence should be crushed by the overwhelming brute force of the Emperor in order to form of the city and its state a dukedom for the establishment of this interesting pair under the protection of their august parents.

Still Florence would not abandon hope. There was still France, and the unsettled quarrel between the French and Spanish pretensions to Naples and Milan. There was still the possibility that Florence might be able to defy both Pope and Emperor by the means of a French alliance.

This delusion, however, did not last long, for on the 5th of the following August a treaty of peace was signed at Cambrai between the Emperor and the French king. The Pope, the Venetians, and the other princelings of Italy, were included in the amicable arrangements. Only Florence was excluded,—only Florence! which had been dupe enough

* The reader will remember the grounds on which the probability that he was so rests. Mecatti, "Storia Cronologica," says that a clause of this Barcelona treaty provides "that Alexander, the natural son of Clement, should marry," &c., thus dropping all affected doubts on the subject of Alexander's parentage.

up to the last, to look to the despot Francis for aid in her struggle for freedom! The most republican of republics was left to stand alone, and fight unaided her last fight for the maintenance of the last spark of liberty against the confederated despots of Europe. Of course they were all friends,—"Most Catholic Emperor," "Most Christian King," "Most Holy Pope!" Of course they were all fast friends for such a crusade! Often as the lesson "put not your trust in princes" has been severely inculcated in the history of mankind, never was it more bitterly enforced than on this occasion. Savonarola, alluding to the cognizance of France and that of Florence, had preached that "lilies should flourish by the side of lilies;"—a puerility which had exercised more influence on the childish-minded citizens than the profoundest wisdom would have obtained. So ignorant of the nature of despotism were these republican merchants as yet, and so unaware of the tendencies of European society at that period, as to have supposed that the French despot would back their fight for freedom against the Spanish tyrant, merely because they had backed him in his quarrel with the Emperor! But kingly instinct taught the despots of the sixteenth century, as clearly as systematised theory can teach those of the nineteenth, that a free Commonwealth self-governed and self-sustained was a dangerous fire-spark among the quenched tinder around, which all of them were virtually interested in trampling out. Bitter as were the resentments between Pope and Emperor, fierce as were the feuds between Emperor and King, all could be forgotten, and Heaven invoked to witness their fraternal reconciliation under the pressure of the common necessity for extinguishing liberty. A.D. 1529.

But not even did this portentous isolation terrify the stout burgher community from their determination to resist to the last the overwhelming combination of forces

A.D. 1529. which had determined on their extinction. And it must be remembered that the monstrous inequality of the coming struggle, which had thus manifestly become a contest of Florence against all Europe, was not all, or perhaps the worst of the danger with which the Florentine government had to contend. Although the ascendancy in the city, which the democratic and more violent party with the Gonfaloniere Carducci at its head at this time possessed, seems to have been sufficiently strong to overawe all overt opposition to its aims and measures, the Commonwealth could not be said to have gone into the struggle whole-hearted or with unanimous wishes. Of course the old adherents of the Medici, as many as remained within the city, were eagerly desirous for the success of the enemies of the Republic. But besides this, there were all those men of the "Ottimati," who disapproved of the course which the popular government was taking. Many of these, having a more just appreciation of the forces with which the Republic was about to contend than the popular leaders, considered the struggle a desperate one, and would have wished to make whatever terms with Clement it might have been possible to obtain from him. These were men of the stamp of Capponi, who had supported his government, and who saw despairingly his fall, and the consequent succession to power of men determined to brave and defy the Pope and his lay supporters. There were also, doubtless, men among the Ottimati to whom the success of a thorough-going democratic government would have been yet more odious than the return of the Medici to power. And it must be borne in mind that, to such men looking at the future from the point of view in which they were then placed, a reconciliation with Clement, and the re-admission of the Medicean princes to the city, did not seem necessarily to imply such a final suppression of the liberty of Florence, and such a shutting off of all future

hopes and chances, as we, looking back over the whole march of events, knew it to have implied. The Medici had been restored more than once before; and yet it had not been all over with struggles for political power in Florence. Far from it! There were happy turns, these men thought, remaining in the wheel of fortune yet. The question was, which future would be likely to offer the best chances, and to be in itself least distasteful to them meanwhile,—the restoration of the Medici, or the ascendancy of the democratic party. And very many of the "Ottimati" were intelligibly enough inclined to think that the latter was the greater evil of the two. A.D. 1529.

The democratic government, however were not so blind to the dangers which surrounded them, as to neglect attempting to avert them by negotiation, if it were possible. At the end of August, 1529, Charles was at Genoa, having come thither from Barcelona; and the Florentine government determined on sending an embassy to him in the hope of modifying his intentions towards the Commonwealth. The citizens chosen for this delicate and most important mission were Matteo Strozzi, Niccolò Capponi, Tommaso Soderini, and Raffaello Girolami. The choice of Capponi on this occasion is remarkable; indicating, as it does, either that the moderates and "Ottimati" had still a sufficiently strong voice in the city to ensure the selection for this most important office of one of their own faction, or that a very marked modification in the sentiments of the democratic party had taken place since Capponi was so recently deposed with ignominy from his office of Gonfaloniere, and narrowly escaped forfeiting his head at the bidding of the popular jealousy and suspicion.

The four envoys proceeded on their forlorn hope to Genoa, and were received with much affability and courtesy by the Emperor. But their hopes, if any had been generated by the Emperor's fair words, were speedily dispelled.

A.D. 1529. The Emperor was ready to "forgive" Florence all that had passed, and to receive the city into his good graces and amity on the sole and simple condition that they should become reconciled to the Pontiff, and receive his family into the city. The envoys turned sorrowfully and sadly on their heels, and set forth on their return journey to carry the news back to their fellow-citizens, that this last hope also had failed them. No one of them, however, reached Florence with these ill tidings. Raffaello Girolami remained at Genoa. Matteo Strozzi, clearly foreseeing, we are told,* that the final ruin of his country was at hand, separated himself from his companions, and betook himself to Venice. Niccolò Capponi, with equally gloomy forebodings in his mind, and with as heavy a heart, but with more patriotism, continued his journey, intending to return with his other colleague to Florence,† till he reached the little hill town of Castelnuovo among the Lucchese Apennines. There he met with another Florentine traveller who was journeying northwards, from whom he heard the latest news from Florence, and the terrible state of alarm and almost of helplessness which prevailed in the city. And there, having heard these tidings, and thinking of the hopelessness of those which he was carrying thither, Niccolò Capponi fell ill, and laid himself down, almost literally by the roadside, and died;—died, say the chroniclers, of grief and broken-hearted despair.‡

The northward travelling citizen, whom Capponi had fallen in with at Castelnuovo, and who had told him those latest news from Florence, which broke the back of his last hope, was one Michele Agnolo Buonnarroti. This Buon-

* Mecatti, op. cit., vol. ii. p. 580.

† Soderini, who however did not return to Florence, but remained at Pisa.

‡ Varchi, vol. ii. p. 42, ed. cit.; Mecatti, op. cit., vol. ii. p. 580; Ammirato, vol. x. p. 94, ed. Firenze, 1826.

narroti had, as the reader knows, hitherto spent his life in acquiring a reputation for mastery in artistic creation, which has not yet been forgotten, or even dimmed by time. He was an exception to the rule that declares that no man is a prophet in his own country and his own generation, or a hero to his own valet. Michele Agnolo Buonnarroti was fully recognized as such by men of all conditions, classes, and parties, both in his own city and out of it. The great ones of the earth, Popes and Princes, bid against each other for his presence and his services. And the successors of St. Peter had been mainly and recently the most successful bidders. Michele Agnolo had of late been engaged at Rome on works which afforded him that boon, inestimable to every creative soul,—an opportunity for worthily incarnating in matter the ideal that was in him;—works on which his whole soul was centered;—and of which the world has since heard. But at the call of his country, in her extreme need and distress, he left all, and at the further risk of irreparably offending the patron whose power and favour alone could enable him ever to continue his work, he came to her;—left glorious visions of creations of ideal beauty and superhuman majesty, to labour at devising bastions and hideous wall-masses, which might serve to defend his native city against the attack of her enemies. For universality and versatility were the especial characteristics of the great creative minds of that period of human development. Not to Buonnarroti alone, but to several others of that epoch, though in a special degree to him, was given that wonderful perfection of intellect, that like the trunk of an elephant, equally adapted for the wrenching of an oak-tree from the soil, or for picking a pin from the floor, can set itself to work on and accomplish with equal perfection those highest feats of human intelligence, which none save the master spirits can conceive, and those smaller and grosser require-

A.D. 1529.

A.D. 1529. ments of their fellow-men, which still none but they can so efficiently perform.

The rats were already running from the old house. Matteo Strozzi stole away to Venice, because his son had recently set up a bank there. The great banker and statesman, Filippo Strozzi, had slunk away in the time of difficulty and danger to Lyons. He had ventured back to Italy in the August of this year, 1529; and had had a long and secret interview with Alessandro de' Medici at Genoa, while the Emperor was still there; and then, finding that it was not yet time to re-appear with advantage in Florence, he stopped short at Lucca, pretended to be ill, and there remained recovering his health simultaneously with the final submission of Florence to the tyrant. Many others had, similarly deserting their country in her need, sought refuge from the troublous times that were about to come upon her in the hospitality of the now thoroughly aristocratic Republic of Lucca. The cautious Lucchese rulers had felt misgivings as to how far it might be compatible with their own safety to harbour these voluntary exiles. But Pope Clement, who doubtless knew his own, gave a hint to those in authority at Lucca, that they would do well to receive such refugees hospitably; and the papal hint was obeyed.

While these earthworms were thus providing for their own immunity from the sufferings which nobler souls were girding up their strength to bear, Michele Agnolo the sculptor, painter, and architect, abandoned, not his personal ease and well-being, not his bank and his wealth, or his safety, but the godlike work of creation and the hopes of immortal fame, to fly to Florence in her distress. Surely greater patriotism hath no man than this, that he give up such hopes for his country.

When Michele Agnolo fell in with Niccolò Capponi at Castelnuovo, he was going by order of the Signory to Ferrara,

for the purpose of studying the fortifications of that city, then deemed a model of military architecture. What was mainly required of the great artist by the Florentines was, that he should devise some means of defending that quarter of the city situated on the further or southern bank of the Arno. The hills which shut in the valley of the Arno on the northern side recede to a distance of two or three miles from the city walls in that direction. But on the other side of the valley they press the city so closely at one point, that the city wall itself climbs the steep side of the hill, on which the now famous Boboli gardens are situated. The nature of the localities on this side was such as to offer sundry points of advantage to a besieging force, and to devise means for fortifying these was the task now assigned to the fertile inventive genius and scientific knowledge of Buonnarroti.* A.D. 1529.

Meanwhile the Florentines, under the active and vigorous government of a Signory entirely composed of "Piagnoni," were sparing nothing and neglecting nothing that might contribute to prepare the city to sustain the coming struggle. It was already known who was to be the General to whom the execution of the Pope's vengeance and the Emperor's policy was to be entrusted. It was Filiberto, Prince of Orange; and news had reached the city that he had arrived in Rome on the 30th of July, 1529, sent by the Emperor to concert measures with the Pope for the reduction of the stiff-necked burghers on the bank of the Arno to obedience.

Still a short further respite was allowed to the Florentines. For the Pope lost some time in chaffering about terms with the General of the Imperial forces, for whose aid, despite the marriage arrangement existing between him and the Emperor, he was forced to pay sums which it went

* Varchi, lib. ix. vol. ii.; Ammirato, lib. xxx.

A.D. 1529. to his heart to part with;—thirty thousand ducats down, and forty thousand more after a short interval.* And when this matter had been thus arranged, a yet further delay occurred before Florence was attacked, in consequence of the Pope's desire that the assistance which cost him so much should be utilized, while he had it at his command, to obtain for him Perugia, then held by Malatesta Baglioni against the Apostolic See, as well as Florence. It was settled, therefore, that the Prince of Orange should in the first instance march against Perugia. That General, however, thinking that it might be possible to obtain possession of Perugia without fighting for it, sent a trusty messenger to negotiate with Baglioni for the surrender of the city. He pointed out to him that he, as a military man, must be aware that he had no means of defending the city against the force which he (Orange) could bring against it; and he further engaged that no agreement to which they might come for the surrender of Perugia should in any wise be held to prevent Baglioni from taking service with the Florentines. It was much against the will of the latter that Baglioni assented to the proposals of the Prince. Of course his doing so had the effect of destroying any chance of escape which Florence might have hoped from the possibility of a successful resistance to the Imperial forces at Perugia, and of bringing the struggle immediately to their own gates.

This Malatesta Baglioni had been made General-in-chief of the Florentine forces in default of Hercules of Este, the son of the Duke of Ferrara. Don Ercole had been elected to that office with the tacit understanding, as Ammirato † says, that his father the Duke Alfonso should also take the field in favour of Florence, if the sequel should render it

* Ammirato, lib. xxx. p. 89, ed. cit.

† Lib. xxx. p. 88, ed. cit.

necessary. The Duke, however, having received three thousand five hundred ducats for the payment of a thousand men destined to be his son's bodyguard, according to the terms of the convention made between him and the Commonwealth, discovered, when it was time for Don Ercole to take the field, that he, as Duke of Ferrara, was a feudatory of the Pope, and could not therefore bear arms against him, or permit his son to do so. This timely discovery, however, by no means induced him to restore the money he had received,—though it *did* move him subsequently to lend his artillery to the Pope for the siege against the Republic, and to send two thousand troops to join the imperial and papal camp before Florence.* Don Ercole, we are told, was no party to his father's fraudulent and shameless conduct;—was indeed so much grieved and revolted by it, that he almost made up his mind to escape secretly from Ferrara, and hurry to Florence to redeem the promise made by his father to the Florentines, as far as might be by his own personal service. A.D. 1529.

He did not do so. Nor can it be supposed that if he had done so, his right feeling could have availed to avert or modify the coming catastrophe. For it had become, by the close of the autumn of 1529, only too evident that the Commonwealth, if indeed it determined on trying resistance to the forces leagued against it, would have to do so absolutely alone, and unsupported by any friend or ally whatsoever. The courage, however, of the city did not quail. And the "Piagnoni" chiefs,—not perhaps without some feeling of that fanatical confidence in the miraculous interposition of Heaven, which had supported their great prophet, and encouraged him with the hope and strong belief that God would not permit the gates of hell to prevail against him,—set themselves to "make all those pro-

* Varchi, vol. ii. p. 36, ed. cit.

A.D. 1529. visions, both divine and human, which under the circumstances their duty required and their utmost power enabled them to do."*

The first step taken was to put to the vote, and (the measure having been carried *nem. con.*) to order that the Black Virgin Mary of the Impruneta should be "devoutly and with the accustomed processions," brought to Florence. This having been done, "the next thing was to engage new commanders, and especially those of the late 'Bande Nere,' the old ranks of which they filled up and increased."

Of course one of the most important and necessary cares was that of raising money. And three bills, as we should say, were passed on one and the same day, the 6th of August, 1529, for this purpose.

The first of these ordered the election, after a certain carefully prescribed fashion, of sixteen citizens, to be called officers of the bank, whose office should consist in the obligation to supply the city with a loan of 80,000 florins. Those who should be nominated to this duty were not to be permitted to decline it. They were empowered to charge twelve per cent. interest on the sum, or more, if it should be shown that any one of them had been obliged to raise his quota of the sum at a higher rate than that. Half of the amount was to be paid into the treasury in the course of that current August, and the remaining half in the following September. A fine of a thousand florins was to be levied on any one of the sixteen who should fail to bring forward the sum he was called on to furnish, and the whole of the sixteen were made mutually responsible for each other.

The second measure was for the appointment of a board of four citizens, to whom was to be entrusted the imposi-

* Varchi, vol. ii. p. 36, ed. cit.

tion and levying of a tax on all the citizens liable to the assessed taxes of the Commonwealth, except such as had contributed to a similar burthen last year. The produce of this tax was to be paid into the treasury within a month from the time of voting the measure. A.D. 1529.

The third provision directed the election of a board of four citizens, who should be empowered to get in all arrears of former taxes and forced loans that might be found to be still due to the treasury.

The next care of the Signory was for the victualling of the city, an object which was much facilitated by the unusual abundance of that year's harvest. Officers were dispatched into all parts of the territory of the Commonwealth, and orders given that every kind of food beyond the absolute need of the tillers of the soil should be sent to Florence. Care was taken at the same time to put all strongholds and fortresses of the country in a perfect state of efficiency and repair. Hostages were demanded from all those cities and towns of the Florentine dominion which laboured under any suspicion of being not altogether loyal and well-affectioned towards the Republic. Borgo San Sepolcro, Cortona, Arezzo, Pisa, Pistoia, and some other places, were thus compelled to send some of their leading men to Florence as pledges of their good faith. Messer Bernardo da Verruzzano was sent as an envoy to Malatesta Baglioni, with orders "to spare no flatteries, cajolements, or honours that could contribute to induce that general to maintain his faith to the Commonwealth," and prevent him from "being corrupted by the promises of the Pope, who was, it was well known, continually tempting him with that view."* Commissaries were also elected and dispatched to various important places,—one to Fiorenzuola and the district lying beyond the Apennines; another to

* Varchi, vol. ii. p. 33, ed. cit.

A.D. 1529. Colle, San Geminiano, and the Val d'Elsa; others to Leghorn, to San Sepolcro, to Pistoia, and to Prato. Finally, seven citizens were elected with nearly dictatorial power to watch over the Commonwealth, to provide in all ways for the safety of the city, and take all such measures as should appear needful for the prosecution of the coming struggle. The citizens elected to this high office and great trust were Jacopo Morelli, Zanobi Carnesecchi, Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, Bernardo da Castiglione, Alfonso, son of Filippo Strozzi, Agostino Dini, and Filippo Baroncini.

But, says Varchi, "these seven citizens on whom the safety of Florence was to depend in a very great degree, were of extremely little, or rather of no service. Because, besides the fact that the major part of them were not of such a capacity as to fit them for so great and high an office, they were so different from each other in character and opinion, and so timid and full of cautious scruples about this, that, and the other difficulty, not to say so vacillating and irresolute, that they could never agree on any line of action, or put their hands to the work in such a manner as the critical and special nature of such a business required. In fact they mutually impeded each other. For Zanobi Carnesecchi, for example, or Agostino Dini, who had no thought in life beyond his own silk manufacture, nor had ever been beyond the limits of his own estates, would never have consented to any great and largely-conceived measure which Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, or Bernardo da Castiglione, for example, might have proposed, if, as needs must be sometimes in matters of such moment, the least risk or danger were involved in it. And prudent well-informed men have not doubted, that if the citizens had elected one sole man, without consideration of any other circumstance than his fitness for the position, as for instance Ferruccio, or Lorenzo Car-

nesecchi, or even some one of less eminent excellence than these, and had made him in truth dictator, things perhaps might have been managed differently from what they were, and as a consequence might have resulted in a different termination."* A.D. 1529.

Yes; but that was exactly what the undying and never-sleeping jealousies and suspicions of the Florentines made it impossible for them to do! It would have been imagined immediately that any citizen, to whom such a power as Varchi speaks of had been entrusted, would have attempted to use it for the purpose of permanently securing to himself sovereign authority. And this was still, as ever, the worst thing, and the most terrible danger to which a Florentine's fears could point.

Among these various efforts the deserted and isolated Commonwealth, looking anxiously around the political horizon to see if from any quarter assistance might be hoped, sent reiterated applications to Venice. And even up to the time which we have now reached,—the autumn of 1529,—the Venetian senate continued to hold out to her sister Republic hopes of support. All such promises were soon seen to be wholly worthless. But it would be difficult to say whether they were at that time intended to be so by the Venetian government. It is perhaps more probable that the wary and cautious Senators were still waiting to see how the stream of events might run, and specially whether it were really the intention of France to make good any of those assurances with which she had continued to feed the hopes of the Commonwealth even after the peace of Cambrai.

Venice was maintaining at the time a resident ambassador at Florence, and was therefore of course supposed to be on terms of friendship with the Commonwealth. On

* Varchi, vol. ii. p. 34, ed. cit.

A.D. 1529. the 24th of September, 1529, this ambassador, Messer Carlo Cappello, writes from Florence to his government that the executive council had received letters from their ambassador at Rome, giving an account of an interview he had just had with the Pontiff.

"His Holiness replied that he could not act in contravention to the agreements made between himself and the Emperor at Barcelona; that they must be fully carried out not only by this government (Florence), but also by that of your Highness (Venice), and by the Duke of Ferrara." [The high tone which Clement, strong in the consciousness of the mutual interest now binding him and the Emperor together, felt himself able to take with reference to Venice, is sufficiently remarkable. The share which Venice was to take in carrying out the agreement made between the Pope and the Emperor was, of course, the abandoning Florence to her fate.] "The Pope added," continues the Venetian ambassador, "that when he should be restored to his proper position, he would show the world that he had no wish to introduce despotism in his native country; that he was anxious, on the contrary, for its welfare; that he lamented the city had been so backward in appealing to him, and that the Prince of Orange had advanced so far. He declared that it was not in his power to control the movements of that General; but that he would nevertheless write to him forthwith, and would send the Archbishop of Capua after him with full powers to compose all differences. With all this," continues the Venetian ambassador, "he gave it to be understood that he was quite determined on recovering his position in Florence, and on the surrender of the Republic at discretion. I found the government" (of Florence), adds the ambassador, "exceedingly indignant at these letters. They declared to me that they would rather burn the city with their own hands, and die amid the ruins, than consent to

such terms."* Of course they knew but too well the profound hypocrisy of Clement's protestations respecting his intentions towards the city. A.D. 1529.

By the 10th of October the Prince of Orange had reached Incisa, a little town in the upper Val d'Arno, about eighteen or twenty miles from Florence; and skirmishes were constantly taking place chiefly between patrolling parties of cavalry belonging to either side,—for the most part, as Carlo Cappello writes to his government, advantageously to the Florentines. The country around Florence was at this time so overrun by these stragglers from the imperial camp, that the ambassador began to find considerable difficulty in keeping up his correspondence with his government as unintermittingly as he had hitherto done. "This evening, an hour after sunset," he writes on the 10th of October, "two peasants came to me, who were bringing me letters which had been entrusted to them at Ravenna on the preceding Wednesday. They were unable to tell me whether or no these letters were from your Highness. But they had thrown them into a thorn-brake about three miles from this city, having been alarmed by some of the enemy's horsemen who pursued them. I sent them back to seek for the letters with all diligence, and they hope to recover them." And again a day or two later he tells the senators that the extreme difficulty of finding any one willing to undertake the dangerous business of carrying his letters, is the cause why he does not communicate with them more frequently.

One of the greatest difficulties with which the government had to contend in preparing to face the storm that was about to break on the Commonwealth, was the quantity of disaffection and treasonable sympathies existing in the city. In a letter bearing date the 15th of October,

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 223.

A.D. 1529. the ambassador gives the names of twenty-two citizens, several of them belonging to some of the first families in the city, such as Valori, Medici, Altoviti, Acciaiuoli, Rucellai, &c., who had just been arrested on suspicion of disaffection to the government, and of nourishing Medicean sympathies. One of these, a certain Carlo Cocchi, was beheaded for having spoken contemptuously of the government. Much about the same time an Observantine friar, named Vettorio Franceschi, was condemned to death for being an emissary of Pope Clement, and having been detected in tampering with an officer in charge of a certain bastion of the city.*

Notwithstanding these and so many other difficulties, the Venetian writes home in the same letter, in which the above circumstances are mentioned, that "all the city is in excellent good heart. The spirit of the citizens is rising every hour, and becoming more and more desirous of measuring their strength against the enemy. Nor can it any longer be said with any truth that the farms of these citizens are hostages for them in the hands of their enemies. For so many magnificent and lovely villas have been burned not only by the enemy, but by the owners of them themselves, that it is difficult to say which is the greater, the barbarous ferocity of the enemy, or the noble determination and fortitude of these citizens. And although it is impossible not to grieve over such wide-spread ruin, it is nevertheless a still higher satisfaction to see the greatness of mind which is manifested in the general promptitude and willingness to suffer all these losses, and indeed any other calamity and peril for the sake of liberty."†

In this mood of mind the citizens and their "Piagnone" government awaited the attack of the Pope and the Emperor. And at last, after some days lost in waiting for

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 236.

† *Ibid.*, p. 234.

the artillery, which Siena, still as ever constant to its old hatred for its rival city, had promised to send to the aid of the imperial army, the Prince of Orange advanced with his main body on the 15th of October, and pitched his camp on the Pian di Ripoli, the gently sloping side of an eminence behind St. Miniato, about a mile from the city wall, on the south side of the river. A.D. 1529.

CHAPTER VII.

Fortification of St. Miniato—Constancy of the Florentines—Small successes of the citizens—Hopelessness of the contest—Defection of subject towns—Sorties of the besieged troops—Florentines still hopeful—Urgent application for aid to Venice—Disappearance of illusions on this point—Reinforcement of the besieging army—Progress of the Imperialist troops in occupying the territory of the Republic—Difficulties of the Venetian ambassador at Florence—Cardinal of Faenza sent by the Pope to Florence—His negotiations with Malatesta—Motives of Malatesta—The city decides on sending envoys to the Emperor and Pope at Bologna—Their reception at Bologna—Their failure, and return to Florence—The Emperor and the Pope at Bologna—Coronation of the former—Letter from the ambassadors of Henry VIII. describing the condition of Italy—Malatesta Baglioni appointed Florentine General-in-chief—Solemn oath taken by all the Florentine leaders—Successes of the Florentines in sorties from the walls—Ineffectual to any real good—Good order maintained in the city—Money abundant in the city—Ungrudgingly contributed by the citizens—None allowed to quit the city—Scarcity of food begins to be severely felt—Increasing mortality in the city—Carnival games in Florence—Hope of help from France not yet abandoned—Hope that a descent of the Grand Turk might cause a diversion—Sufferings in the camp of the besiegers—Battle of champions of the two parties under the walls of Florence—Fruitless successes of the Florentines in skirmishes around the walls—Progress of famine—It was becoming evident that the city would succumb to this foe.

So now the curtain rose to the last act of Florentine liberty and of this story.

The citizens, by the advice of Buonnarroti, had placed two guns on the tower of St. Miniato;—that sturdy and defiant-looking square mass of now ivy-grown masonry which still frowns in picturesque gloom from the top of the convent-crowned hill, on the smiling city in the vale below.

Florence has well-nigh forgotten those disastrous days, and is smiling in the radiance of her new fortunes. But the old tower of St. Miniato might well suggest the fancy that it had forgotten nothing, but was still gloomily brooding over the sad scenes which were the last in which it took any active part. The two guns on the top of this sturdy tower commanded the position selected by the Prince of Orange for his encampment, and did much mischief among the tents. The general's first object, therefore, was to silence these guns. And on the 29th of October the Imperial artillery, and that which had been lent by Siena, opened against St. Miniato's tower. But by the directions of Michele Agnolo the building had been so thickly cased with bales of wool, no less than a thousand and eight hundred bales having been used for the purpose, that the enemy's guns, though striking it several times, produced no effect upon it;—while the fire from its summit continued to gall them severely. "And although," writes the Venetian ambassador, "this is the first time that this city has ever heard the sound of artillery near its walls, there is not a man who is not constant and firm in his determination to defend it to the last. There are eight thousand hired soldiers in the city, and five thousand native militia, from eighteen to fifty years of age. And these latter in no wise spare themselves, nor avoid either labour or danger, by day or by night, whether in guarding the city, taking their turn on the walls and bastions in conjunction with the hired soldiers, or in labouring at the repairs of fortifications, or in making sorties for the obtaining of fascines for that purpose; in collecting which they do not abstain from cutting and laying waste their own farms, that nothing may be wanting to the more complete defence of the city. In truth, the behaviour of the citizens here is above all praise. Nor are they less diligent in gaining the favour of Divine Providence by worship, by fasting, by sacraments, A.D. 1529.

A.D. 1529. and processions, in which all the above-mentioned militia take part;—a thing most wonderful in our times to hear of or to see,—that arms should be thus conjoined to piety and the fear of God. Within the city there is neither faint-heartedness, nor noise, nor any disturbance of any kind. Money is abundant; and a few days since, the villa in which the Prince of Orange is now lodged, together with the estate attached to it, was publicly sold for its full value, as might have been done in happier times."*

Notwithstanding all this admirable constancy and firmness, and notwithstanding some little successes against the enemy,—as when on the 30th of October† a sortie of cavalry intercepted a convoy of the Imperialists bringing food from Arezzo, dispersed the escort, and took a hundred beasts laden with provisions;—as well as rumours that the Imperial forces were already hard pressed for food and fodder;—notwithstanding all this, it must have appeared almost certain to any impartial observer, who had had an opportunity of scanning all the features of the situation, that the contest could have but one conclusion. The subject towns of the beleaguered city began to see the matter but too clearly in that light. Before the end of October the towns of Colle and San Gemigniano had thrown off their allegiance to Florence and "given themselves to Cæsar." But the citizens were, as the Venetian ambassador assures us, very little disturbed at the news of this defection, as they had determined to hold only Prato, Pistoia, Empoli, Pisa, and Leghorn; "which cities and fortresses are garrisoned in such sort, that they have no fears concerning them."

And for awhile the events of the war seemed to justify

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 238. The reader will be reminded—as, perhaps, the Florentine citizens were—of the sale at Rome of the land on which Hannibal was encamped.

† Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 241.

this attitude and sentiment of hopeful confidence. On the 2nd of November, Cappello writes that the constant skirmishes which were taking place, and the sorties that were made nearly every day by the besieged, resulted almost uniformly in favour of the latter. A week later, he writes that almost daily parties both of cavalry and infantry were making expeditions from the city, and constantly returning with prisoners and booty, both horses and provisions. "The war," he writes, "is a war to the death; and every Spaniard or German soldier taken is put to death; for the enemy on his part does the same. The city fails not to use all diligence in every needful operation of the war; nor is there any appearance of fear or misgiving to be seen."* On the night of the 9th November, under cover of a severe storm and great darkness, the enemy made an attack in great force on all that part of the wall which lies between the San Niccolò gate and that of San Frediano,—the whole of the city wall on the southern bank of the river, that is to say;—but they were repulsed with considerable loss. A.D. 1529.

On the 19th of November the tidings sent to Venice by the ambassador continue to be all of the same complexion. "The citizens are every day skirmishing with the enemy, and always to their honour and advantage. The cavalry is continually making booty in all parts of the country, and gives great hindrance to the enemy in victualling themselves. The band under Jacopo Bichi† has in three expeditions captured three hundred horses, one hundred of them war horses. The government has determined on selling all the property, real or personal, of all exiles; and there is no lack of buyers at prices such as were current in time of peace. And in addition to the large sums obtained

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 142.

† A Sienese captain, of whom Varchi says, that if he had not been prematurely cut off he would have equalled the greatest captains of his day.

A.D. 1529. from this source, the government has imposed a tax to the amount of thirty thousand ducats, payable within the month, the whole of which has already been received. So great is the readiness of every one, and the determination to defend their city and preserve their liberty."

Not yet had the Florentines given up the hope that Venice would come to their help in their extremity. Almost every letter of the ambassador speaks of the urgency with which the Florentine government was continually pressing him to represent their case to the Venetian Senate, and lay before them the arguments which seemed to them calculated to convince the Queen of the Adriatic that it was not for her own interest to see Florentine liberty crushed. And it is clear that up to this time Venice was still encouraging Florence to resist, by holding out to her hopes of succour and support.

But by the end of November all illusions of this sort, whether as regarded Venice, or any other of the powers of Italy, were at an end. "Though the government here," writes the Venetian ambassador at that date, "are continually receiving advices from various quarters, by which they learn for certain that the Duke of Milan has arrived at Bologna, that the Dukes of Ferrara and of Urbino are shortly expected there, and that at the same time your Highness has as good as come to an agreement with the Emperor and the Pope; and though it is impossible for them not to see that they are abandoned by every one; and though the return of the Prince (of Orange, who had been temporarily absent from the camp) from Bologna with a reinforcement of three thousand infantry is expected hourly, and the Duke de Leva with a large body of 'lanzknechts' is also expected, nevertheless for all this they do not lose heart, but are more than ever determined to defend their liberty to the last extremity."

The going of the Dukes of Milan, Ferrara, and Urbino

to Bologna proved that Florence had nothing more to hope from them, because the motive of their journey thither was to be present at a meeting between the Pope and the Emperor, which had been arranged to take place in that city for the solemn coronation of Charles as Emperor and King of Italy. He received in fact from the hands of Clement, the Lombard, or Italian, crown, on the 22nd of February, 1530, and that of the Empire on the 24th of the same month. A.D. 1530.

Gradually too the enemy, though they had been able to accomplish nothing against the walls of Florence, and though the isolated passages of arms which were constantly taking place outside of them were almost always in favour of the besieged, were successfully occupying the most important points of the territory of the Commonwealth, and fatally cutting off the supply of food from the city. On the 6th of December the Imperialist forces took Lastra and Signa, places about seven miles from Florence, on the river commanding the communication with Pisa and all the lower Val d'Arno. And the result of this and of similar misfortunes in other directions was already making itself felt in the city, which was beginning to suffer from scarcity. "I am compelled by necessity," writes Messer Carlo Cappello to the Doge, "to tell your Highness that the expense of living here in this state of war and siege is continually increasing. It has latterly become double from one day to another; in such sort, that it is impossible for me to live here on my salary, or on my own small means."*

Nevertheless, he writes at the same time that the citizens remain firm in their determination "either to preserve their liberty, or so to bear themselves, that if they lose it, after having lost all they possess, no one among them

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 250.

A.D. 1530. shall survive it, and men shall hereafter say, 'Here once stood Florence!'"

The letters from the Venetian ambassador to his government henceforward begin to be less frequent. "I have delayed writing to your Highness till now," he says on the 26th of December, "in consequence of the difficulty of finding messengers, which is becoming greater from day to day, because the enemy are infesting every part of the territory." In the same letter, thanking the Doge for granting the increase of salary which he had asked, he says that the rise in the cost of living in Florence is still rapidly increasing, and becoming insupportable. Of course the scarcity was felt far more severely by the mass of the citizens, whose sufferings from this cause were beginning to be very painfully felt.

Early in January, 1530, Ridolfo Pio, Bishop of Faenza, and afterwards a Cardinal, presented himself in Florence, desiring to confer with Malatesta Baglioni on behalf of the Pope. And he was allowed by the government to become the guest of the general in his house, and to treat with him privately in perfect freedom. Varchi tells us that this agent of Clement had been sent at the private instigation of Malatesta himself; adding that it is difficult to understand what could have been the general's motive in making such an application to the Pontiff.* The historian suggests that perhaps Malatesta's object was to obtain some amelioration or ratification of the terms which had been made between the Pope and him respecting the giving up of Perugia. But it would seem far more difficult to understand the conduct of the Florentine government in permitting such secret conferences to be held between an emissary of their implacable and astute enemy and their own by no means irreproachably faithful general. Mala-

* Varchi, op. cit., ed. cit., vol. ii. p. 290.

testa was exceedingly anxious just at that time to have the appointment and "bâton" of Florentine general-in-chief conferred upon him. Ercole, son of the Duke of Ferrara, had held that station until the close of the year 1529, though he had never discharged any of the duties belonging to it, as has been seen. The term for which his "condotta" had been conferred on him had now expired, and Malatesta was making every effort to be named his successor. And perhaps the Florentine government may have thought, that it was not to be supposed that under these circumstances the man who was eagerly seeking this promotion at their hands,—a promotion of which the main value to him would consist in the good use he should make of it,—was at the same time plotting against them. And it may be that those to whom the conduct of the government in this matter seems to have been extraordinarily over-confident, are led, as is so often the case, to the formation of that opinion in a greater degree than is just, by that knowledge of subsequent events, and that synoptical view of the character of the man as exhibited by them, which were at that time hidden from those who had to decide on the line of conduct then most expedient. Very probably also the Florentine Signory was influenced by a lingering hope, that any means of opening negotiations with the Pontiff might yet result in releasing the city from the increasingly terrible calamities of the position in which it was placed by its hostility to him. A.D. 1530.

What private matters may have been discussed between the Bishop of Faenza and Malatesta, we have no means of knowing. But the patent result of their conferences was a strongly urged opinion on the part of Malatesta, that the city would do well to send yet another embassy to Clement, who was then at Bologna. The question whether this advice should be taken or rejected was very warmly debated in Florence, and the government decided on

A.D. 1530. consulting the Great Council on the subject. This was done; and the result was a vote of 1000 votes in favour of the embassy, against 373 in opposition to it.* The largeness of this majority in favour of such a measure may be taken perhaps, if we bear in mind the absolute and almost insulting failure of former tentatives of the same sort, and the angry determination of the citizens to fight out their quarrel with the Pontiff "to the bitter end," which resulted from those failures, as a symptom of the severity of the suffering which was beginning to try their constancy and firmness.

On the 6th of January, two ambassadors† were appointed, and on the 14th they started for Bologna. "And several young men of Florence set out with them, some for different motives, and some for the sake of seeing the coronation of the Emperor, among whom was Benedetto Varchi, the writer of this history." The story of their embassy was one of failure and premeditated insult throughout. The Pope was not only altogether unyielding, but harsh even to discourtesy in his reception of them. The Emperor had nothing to say to them, but that they must be reconciled to the Pope before he could listen to them. The Cardinals, whom the unhappy ambassadors,—thinking it their duty to leave no stone unturned before they returned to report the utter fruitlessness of their efforts,—visited in succession, were either courteously evasive, or discourteously imperious and threatening. The Emperor's confessor took it upon himself to read them a lecture on the law of the Imperial sovereignty, by which he showed that Florence, having forfeited by rebellion all chartered rights, must now consider herself at the absolute disposition of the Emperor; "speaking these things with a grave face, as if he absolutely believed what he was saying,"

* Varchi, op. cit., ed. cit., vol. ii. p. 297.

† Luigi Soderini and Andreuolo Niccolini.

writes Varchi. The courtiers, Papal and Imperial, with whom Bologna was crowded, pointed at them as they passed through the streets, and taunted them with the futility of the fool's errand on which they had been sent. It was said at the time, Varchi tells us, honestly giving the circumstance as a report of the accuracy of which he was not certain, that the chamber which was assigned to the ambassadors as their lodging had been, by Clement's order, stripped of its brick flooring, in order that the conversation of the Florentine envoys between themselves, in the supposed privacy of their own apartment, might be overheard by persons placed for that purpose in the room below them. A.D. 1530.

On the 7th of February the ambassadors returned with heavy hearts to the beleaguered and now starving city, to report the utter hopelessness of all attempts at obtaining anything from the justice or clemency of either Pope or Emperor, and left the throng of high and mighty personages and courtiers who were assembled at Bologna to the magnificent performance of the first part of the bargain which had signed the death-warrant of Italian liberty.

The meeting at that city was of course a satisfactory and "glorious" one for both of the contracting parties. All was going well for the hopes of each of them. The Vicar of Christ was well assured that the extremity of misery and famine was working to his will within the walls of Florence. He had secured, moreover, the interested co-operation of the Emperor in the work of finally and definitively appropriating Florence as an heritage and possession for his family. Charles on his side was, by his operations before Florence, providing the crown of a sovereign duchess for his daughter, and was about to receive, with all due and comforting accompaniment of holy prayers and blessings, those dear objects of his kingly ambition, the crowns of Italy and of the Empire.

A.D. 1530. Cardinal Bembo, in a letter to Clement bearing date the 7th of April, 1530, speaks of Bologna as having been on this occasion "the theatre of the whole world, within whose walls were assembled a greater number of noble and illustrious men than the world had ever before seen brought together."

They were great days,—those Bologna coronation-days,—days such as historians are wont to commemorate in glowing descriptions to the edification of heralds of all colours, and ushers of all kinds of sticks and rods, in succeeding generations. But mankind knows only too well by heart the routine of such great days; the solemn hymns and the silken hangings; the shouting crowds and the shining soldiery; the old oaths broken, and the new oaths sworn; the bowings and the benedictions; the *Te Deums* and the dinners; the bargaining, the overreaching, the signing and the sealing; the processioning and trumpet-blowing and organ-swelling;—all the greatness and all the glory producible by the united efforts of cooks, tailors, priests, trumpeters, and upholsterers! We know all about it, and have no difficulty whatever in picturing to ourselves the grave and graceful courtesies that passed between God's vicegerent in cloth-of-gold and God's anointed in velvet. Nor is it much less easy to imagine what must have been the feelings of these two men towards each other, when, the day's comedy over, and cloth-of-gold and velvet laid aside, the solitude of the night hours compelled them to make some approach towards truthful communing with their own hearts. How heartily must the Pontiff have hated the Emperor! And how entirely must the Emperor have despised the Pontiff! How small and selfish the motives that actuated either of them! Yet on the result of their bargaining depended the happiness of thousands, and the prosperity of wide spaces of the fairest portion of God's earth.

It is interesting in this point of view to observe what was the state of social life in Italy while its rulers were thus happily regulating their affairs, and to mark to what pitch the wisdom of their rule had brought things in that garden of Europe. The native historians of the time all agree in lamentable representations of the general state of the country; but it will be more interesting to the English reader to see the impression made, by their journey through the country, on a couple of Englishmen who were present on that occasion at Bologna. A.D. 1530.

Sir Nicholas Carew and Richard Sampson, Henry VIII.'s ambassadors to the conference, write as follows to that monarch from "Bononie, the 12th day Decembre."

After saying that their expenses are so very great that they must throw themselves on the King's assistance, seeing that the provision, which they had been led to think would be enough for three months, had turned out to be insufficient for one; and that in consequence of "the utter destruccion of the hole countrey, in a manner everything is sold for the weyte of gold," they continue:—

"It is, Sire, the moost pitie to see this countree, as we suppose, that ever was in Christyndom; in some places nother horsmete nor man's mete to be found; the goodly townes destroyed and desolate. Betwixte Verceilles,* belongyng to the Duke of Savoye and Pavye, the space of 50 miles, the moost goodly countree for corne and vynes that may be seen, is so desolate, in all that weye, we sawe oon man or woman laborers in the fylde, nor yet creatour stering; but in great villaiges 5 or 6 myserable persons; savyng in all this weye we sawe three women in oone place gathering of grapis yett upon the vynes; for there are nother vynes orderyd and kepte, nor corne saved in all that weye, nor personnes to gather the grapes, that growyth

* Vercelli.

A.D. 1530. uppon the vynes; but the vynes growyth wyld; great countreys, and hanging full of clusters of grapes. In this mydde weye is a towne, the which hath been oone of the goodly townes of Italye, callyd Vigeva;* there is a strong hold; the towne is all destroyed, and in maner desolate. Pavye is in lyke maner, and great pitye; the chyldryn kryeng about the streates for bred, and yea dying for hungre. They seye that all the hole peuple of that contrey and dyvers other places in Italya, as the Pope also shewyd us, with many other, with warre, famine, and pestilence, are utterly deadde and goone; so that there is no hope many yeres that Italya shalbe any thing well restored for wante of people; and this destruction hath been as well by Frenche men as th' Emperour's; for they sey that Monsr. de Lantreyght destroyed muche where as he passyd."†

On the 15th of January, 1530, Malatesta Baglioni received the bâton of General-in-Chief of the Florentine Commonwealth, with 6400 ducats of yearly pay, and a body guard of two hundred light horse, five-and-twenty free lances, and, as long as the war should last, a thousand foot soldiers. On the following day the new general, with all the captains of all arms in the city, together with the commissaries-general for the conduct of the war, assembled in the church of St. Nicholas, and there, after the celebration of a mass, each man advancing to the altar took a solemn oath in no case and in nowise to abandon the duty before them; but, without regard to failure of money or of food, to defend the city as long as they had strength left to stand upright.‡

But the number of the beleaguering forces was continually being increased, and the city more completely blockaded, to the exclusion of all possibility of introducing

* Vigevano. † State Papers of Henry VIII., vol. vii. p. 225.
‡ Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 265.

food. Nevertheless skirmishing was still frequently taking place beneath the walls, and for the most part, according to the testimony of the Venetian ambassador, to the advantage of the Florentines. But such successes, though they served to keep up the hearts and courage of the citizens, were unproductive of any real advantage. And though the besieged continued with unremitting industry to multiply the defences with which the besiegers would have to contend, if they should attempt to take the city by assault, it seemed as if their labour to this end would be equally fruitless. For there was reason to believe, says the ambassador, that the Imperial general did not contemplate any such attempt; but was determined patiently to await the surer though slower operation of famine. A.D. 1530.

"But though the difficulties and sufferings increase daily," writes the Venetian, "yet the good order maintained within the city is such, and the constancy of the citizens' minds so great, that nobody would imagine from the aspect of the city, if they were not aware of the fact, that it was surrounded by a hostile force."*

Varchi also, speaking of the same period, and the same condition of things, writes:—

"Despite all, life went on in Florence not only without fear, but without suspicion of cause for it. And amid such a mass of strangers of such various kinds, order was maintained as if there had not been a soul save the citizens within the walls. The shops were kept open; the magistrates held their courts as usual, the various functions of government were carried on; in the churches the usual services were performed; the *piazza* and the market were frequented; there were neither tumults among the soldiers nor disputes among the citizens. For though there were among them many discontented and disaffected, holding

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 269.

A.D. 1530. various opinions, and belonging to various factions, they nevertheless abstained from quarrelling either by deed or word; saying, 'This is no time for folly! Let us get rid of the enemy from around our walls; and then we will settle our own disputes.' And at all the street corners might be seen written in large letters, either in chalk or charcoal, the words, 'Poor, but free!'"*

During the months of March and April the city still kept up its heart and courage in the face of daily increasing difficulties and sufferings. Money was not wanting in the city; and the government had little difficulty in raising whatever supplies were needed. In March a hundred citizens were named by the Signory who were required to lend a hundred ducats each; fifty who were to furnish two hundred; and twenty-five who were to contribute three hundred each. A new tax to the amount of a hundred and fifty thousand ducats was imposed, and all these sums were readily paid. The goods of ecclesiastics and rebels were sold both in Florence and in Pisa, and very large sums drawn from this source. But the abundance of money did not imply abundance of food. The ducats could not be eaten. "It is clear," writes the Venetian ambassador on the 26th of April, "that there is no danger that money should fall short, especially as all returns into the purses of the citizens, by reason of the enormous sums which it costs the soldiers to live. They draw, it is true, excessively large pay; but everything is beyond measure dear,—so that even with much more money they could not support themselves. The result is, that many have during the last few days quitted the city; so that there do not remain in it more than six thousand infantry. But these are all choice soldiers, and well disposed. I will not conceal the fact, however, that many of

* Varchi, lib. x.

the citizens and of the city militia have left the city, flying from the inconveniences and sufferings of life within the walls. But now such good guard is kept, that it is impossible for any more to find the means of getting out of the city."* Some time previous to this it had been decided that meat should be sold only to the soldiers. But now the scarcity of all other food was making itself more and more severely felt from day to day. The result of insufficient nourishment and of "unwonted articles of food," was beginning also to manifest itself in a rapidly increasing mortality. From the 15th of March to the 15th of April there were five thousand eight hundred and sixty deaths in the city.† A.D. 1530.

In the midst of all this suffering, however, the Florentines, more, it may well be believed, from bravado, and the desire to show one another as well as the enemy that they were not losing courage, than from lightness of heart, would not let the carnival pass without some at least of its usual festive doings. The accustomed game of "calcio" was celebrated with more than usual pomp in the Piazza of Santa Croce; and the players, "in order that they might be seen by the enemy as well as heard, stationed a portion of the musicians with trumpets and other instruments on the ridge of the roof of Santa Croce, which drew a shot from the enemy's cannon, but the ball passed over their heads, and did no harm."‡

The truth was, that the citizens and their government had by no means as yet abandoned hope of succour from France. The sons of Francis I., who had been left as hostages in the hands of the Emperor, when Francis had been allowed to leave the Spanish prison, to which the battle of Pavia consigned him, had not yet been restored. Francis had, it will be remembered, immediately broken

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 286.
† *Ibid.* ‡ Varchi, op. cit., ed. cit., vol. ii. p. 322.

A.D. 1530. the oaths for the due observance of which his children had been given in pledge. But all these old scores between the "Most Christian" King and the "Most Catholic" Emperor had been wiped out by the peace and treaty of Cambrai; and the French princes were now about to be restored to their father. They had not yet, however, been sent to France. And the Florentines flattered themselves that as soon as Francis should have his sons safe in his hands, he would once again be as faithless to the Cambrai treaty as he had been to his former oath;—would change his policy, and declare himself in their favour.

Vain hopes, born of the despair that was rapidly closing in around them!

And they were buoying themselves up also with another equally delusive expectation of a possible means of deliverance. They hoped that the Grand Turk might invade Italy with such a force as to make a diversion in their favour, and they had not failed to endeavour to instigate him to do so by means of ambassadors. And the Venetian ambassador at Florence thinks it necessary to warn his government of these attempts, as pointing to a possible danger which it behoved them not to be uninformed of.

On the other hand, the enemy in the Imperial camp, without the walls, was by no means enjoying an immunity from the ills they were causing. They also were pressed for want of food; and money was far less abundant among them than it was in the city. There was also a considerable amount of disorder and disaffection in the camp. Disease was rife among them too, and deserters were numerous. But while the scarcity of food, with which they had to contend, was likely to be diminished as the coming summer advanced, the distress of the besieged within their walls could not but become more intense with every passing day. The continual feats of arms, which were almost daily taking place outside the walls,

were almost invariably in favour of the Florentines, according to the testimony of the Venetian ambassador, whose secret communications to his government must be considered as perfectly trustworthy. A.D. 1530.

One of these frequent passages of arms has acquired a certain degree of celebrity in Florentine story, rather from the romantic circumstances of the contest, and the names of the combatants, than from any importance attaching to the result. On the 12th of March two of the besieged, Ludovico Martelli and Dante da Castiglione, challenged two knights of the Imperial camp, Giovanni Bandini and Bettino Aldobrandini, to a twofold duel. The challengers stigmatised the challenged in their defiance as rebels against their country and enemies to God, and the fight took place under the eyes of the rival hosts, according to the rules prescribed for such knightly encounters. Dante da Castiglione made Aldobrandini prisoner, and the challenge having been *à outrance*, slew him. But Martelli, blinded by the blood which flowed from a wound in the forehead, was overcome by Bandini. "Out of this combat," writes the ambassador, "an infinite number of others has arisen, so that such fights are taking place every day."

And still the balance of advantage in such fights, and in the skirmishes around the city, was mostly in favour of the Florentines. A few days after the notable duel that has been mentioned, there was a skirmish under the walls, in which a hundred and fifty of the besieging force were slain. There began also to be a movement of deserters from the Imperial camp coming into the city. The pay of Cæsar was small, uncertain, and always much in arrear; that of the city prompt and generous. But it might well be a question how far the position of the citizens was improved by such increase of mouths to be fed out of the slender stock of food in the city, now waning with alarming

A.D. 1530. rapidity, even though they brought an increase of arms with them.

For the same reason there was in fact little consolation or hope to be derived from the valour which caused almost all the isolated fights around the city to result in favour of the besieged. For it was becoming day by day more clear that famine was the sure and inevitable force which would eventually decide the struggle. It began to be observed that the enemy showed themselves indisposed to engage in the skirmishing which had so constantly shown the superiority of the citizens. "Although provoked, they would not come out from their lines," says the ambassador, "but very palpably answered, 'We are not going to fight with you; we mean to wait till famine has conquered you, and then take you with your girdles for halters!'"

CHAPTER VIII.

Three possibilities still open to the Florentines—First, an attack on the coasts of Italy by the Turk—This hope quickly fades—Second, a sortie in force which should destroy the besieging army—Untrustworthiness of the Florentine generals—A sortie in force decided on—Amico da Venafro killed by the General Stefano Colonna—The sortie ineffectual to any good purpose—Difference of opinion among the citizens—Undoubted testimony to the treason of Malatesta Baglioni—Third and last source of hope for the Florentines, in the operations of their army outside the city—Francesco Ferruccio—Volterra recovered by him—Plan of operations devised by Ferruccio—The Signory order him to act otherwise—Execution of traitors within the city—Intention of turning the "contadini" out of the city—The government relents and abandons the idea—Progress of famine in the city—Increase of mortality from pestilence—Determination of the citizens to fight a last battle—and, if vanquished, to destroy the women and the city—The Prince of Orange marches to meet Ferruccio—having been assured by Malatesta that no attack should be made on the besieging force in his absence—Ferruccio detained at Pisa by illness—The Florentines prevented from attacking the besieging army by their generals—Stefano Colonna a traitor to the Florentine cause—Danger of a struggle within the walls—Disaffected among the citizens—Probable number of these—Erroneous tidings of the result of the battle between Ferruccio and the Prince of Orange reach Florence—Sortie of the Florentines so managed by the Florentine generals as to lead to nothing—Correct news of the battle of Gavinana reach Florence—Fatal results of this defeat—The Signory consent to send envoys to the Imperialist General—Baglioni throws off the mask—Danger of a contest in the city—Baglioni completely master of the situation—The Signory abandon all hope of further resistance—Danger of the city from the soldiery—Preserved from it by the active vigilance of Baglioni—His motive—Articles of capitulation—Unblushing violation of them by the Pope—and by the Emperor—Conclusion.

It was indeed but too clear that the nature of the situation was such as to make time an irresistible ally on the side of the besiegers. Nevertheless, there were three

A.D. 1530. possible means by which the position might be changed to the profit of the besieged.

The first, from which the Florentines were at this time drawing the most flattering, but utterly delusive hopes, was the possibility that the Turk might attack the Adriatic coast of the kingdom of Naples in such force as to make it absolutely necessary for the Emperor to call off his army from besieging Florence to the more indispensable duty of defending his own possessions. Little by little, however, it had become evident before the summer was over that no such diversion was to be expected.

In the second place, it might be possible for the citizens to sally out from their walls with their paid troops, and—better still—with their own native militia, and succeed in utterly routing and demolishing the force which was hemming them in. And in truth there does not seem to have been anything chimerical in such a hope. The besieging army was by no means in a flourishing or satisfactory condition. The pay of the troops was much in arrear. The Emperor had departed from Bologna without making provision for the payment of them. The Pope was very hard pressed for money. It was known in the city that Baccio Valori had recently returned from Rome to the camp bringing with him from Clement only twenty-six thousand ducats, which was known to be very far from sufficient to pay the troops.* There was much discontent among them. Some had marched off and left the camp altogether. Others were in an almost mutinous state. Many were scattered over the country in plundering parties. There were, in a word, many reasons that seemed to make it probable that a well-planned and vigorous attack by the Florentine forces might be successful. The citizens accordingly were very anxious for a sortie in force.

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 283.

And there is reason to think that Stefano Colonna, who commanded the city militia, was well-minded to do his duty by the Commonwealth, and might have been altogether trustworthy, had it not been, that perhaps he would not have been ill-pleased to see Malatesta Baglioni, the commander of the hired troops and general-in-chief, unsuccessful and discredited. When the term for which Ercole of Ferrara had been engaged expired at the beginning of the year,* Stefano Colonna would fain have been his successor as general-in-chief of the Florentine forces. But Malatesta Baglioni, who had put in action every sort of intrigue among the citizens with a view to obtaining the appointment, had been preferred to him. And it was suspected, not probably without reason, that the Colonna would have been well-pleased that the Florentines should have cause to see that they had preferred the worse to the better man.† A D. 1530.

Malatesta had shown no eagerness to make any such attempt as the citizens were bent on trying. But the doubts of his good faith became so general in the city, and the expression of such doubts was growing so much louder and bolder from day to day, that the general, who was perfectly well-informed of every word that was said in the city, and who, whatever his real wishes might have been, was anxious to save his credit as a general of hired troops, and to avoid the stain of treachery on his character, determined to make such a sortie in force as the public opinion demanded. And the 5th of May was fixed for the enterprise.

One or two circumstances occurred to mar the success of the attempt on the part of the Florentines. In the first place, the sortie was not made with all the available force in the city. And the jealousy between the two com-

* 1530. † Varchi, op. cit. ed. cit., vol. ii. p. 355.

A.D. 1530. manders was doubtless in a great degree the cause of this. In the second place, a certain Captain Amico da Venafro, one of the best officers in the Florentine service, was unfortunately slain by the hand of the General Stefano Colonna on the very morning on which the sortie was to take place. Colonna had given a pass permitting a woman of the city to quit it with her goods. She presented herself for that purpose at a gate at which Da Venafro was keeping guard. He, declaring that he recognised no superior orders save those of the Signoria of Florence, refused to allow the woman to pass. The fact was of course at once reported to Colonna, who unfortunately, while still furious with rage at the slight shown him, met Da Venafro in the street, as the latter was on his way to the *Palazzo Pubblico* to report the matter to the Signory. "You are the fellow, are you, who sets my orders at naught?" exclaimed Colonna, at the same moment dealing him a sword-blow which brought him to the ground. And in the next instant he was despatched by the pikes of the general's body guard. Of course the Signory were powerless under the circumstances to take notice in any way of the deed. But the loss of Amico da Venafro was much deplored; and it was felt that, in losing him, Florence had lost an arm that she could ill spare that day.*

Nevertheless the battle that took place mainly on and around the heights to the south of the city was maintained for four hours with the most determined obstinacy, and on the whole to the advantage of the citizens. This balance of advantage, however, was not such as was needed to render the effort of any real service to the Florentine cause. It has been asserted that Malatesta treacherously and traitorously withdrew his troops at the moment when a complete victory was in his hands. And upon the whole there

* Varchi, op. cit., ed. cit. vol. ii. p. 357.

is abundant reason to believe that this man was a traitor to his employers; but it must be admitted that the relation of Varchi* does not bear out the accusation upon this occasion. Having spoken previously of Malatesta's desperate efforts during the battle, despite a state of health which rendered him almost incapable of fighting, this perfectly trustworthy historian writes: "It was near the Ave Maria (sunset) when Malatesta, fighting more desperately than ever, caused the signal for retreat to be given to his soldiers. The number of the slain, as well as of those wounded, was variously stated. But two things were affirmed with certainty; the first, that on the following day in the roll-call of the bands who had gone out from the city, two hundred of the best infantry were missing; the second, that the loss on the part of the enemy was greater than this. Two things also were believed as almost certain; the first, that if Amico da Venafro had not been killed, the victory would have been complete on that side of the city where the struggle was; the second, that if the fight of that day had been made a grand battle, by sending out of the city all the disposable force, and that in the right direction, the Imperial camp would have been altogether broken up, and consequently the war brought to a victorious termination. Though some persons said, and with good reason believed, that such breaking up of the camp would have caused greater evils to the Florentines, inasmuch as they would only have the more irritated the Pope, and made a more implacable foe of the Emperor." A.D 1530.

It seems little better than childish to imagine a state of warfare, in which a success is to be considered valueless because it may tend to anger the enemy. But of course those who held the opinions mentioned by Varchi, were

* *Loc. cit.*

A.D. 1530. really of opinion that all opposition to the will of the Pope and the Emperor was vain and inexpedient; and considered, —in all probability with good reason,—that the amount of power at the command of those princes, and put in action for the crushing of Florentine liberty, was far too great to be effectually resisted or impeded in its action by any single success against it.

It is to be observed, however, that Varchi says no word in the above passage tending to throw doubt on the good faith of Malatesta. Nevertheless there can be no doubt that this man was a traitor. And if upon the occasion of the sortie of the 5th of May he seemed to be endeavouring to do his duty, such seeming must be attributed to his anxiety so to manage his treason as to save as far as possible his character as a military leader. There are various expressions in those letters of the Venetian ambassador, written to his government during the siege, which sufficiently indicate his opinion of Messer Malatesta Baglioni. And Varchi gives, in more than one passage of his history,* abundant proofs of his bad faith. He reports also the answer given by the Venetian senator, Dandolo, when asked by the ambassador of the Duke of Urbino, if it were indeed true that Baglioni had betrayed Florence, in these words: "He has sold the people, and the city, and the blood of those unfortunate citizens ounce by ounce; and has fixed on himself the stigma of the vilest traitor in the world."

If this decisive and entirely trustworthy testimony were not sufficient, further proof of the premeditated and calculated treason and treachery of this Malatesta Baglioni may be found in the long and detailed narrative of Jacopo Nardi. It is not clear, that any successes obtained by the citizen army against the Imperialist troops engaged in be-

* Varchi, op. cit. ed. cit., vol. ii. pp. 355, 507.

sieging Florence, would have availed to avert the doom which had been pronounced against Florentine liberty in the councils of the Emperor and the Pope. However desperate the valour which might have marked any such attempts, and however great might have been the immediate result of them in dispersing the ill-paid and half-mutinous troops of the Prince of Orange, it is hardly to be imagined that Florence could have permanently resisted the overwhelming force of the coalition of powers bent on her destruction. But it is clear, that whatever possibility of ultimate benefit might have been contingent on such successes, and whatever chance of better terms obtainable under such circumstances might have lain in them, were stolen from the befooled and betrayed citizens by the treachery of their hired general. A.D. 1530.

There only remained therefore the last of the three possibilities of hope mentioned above; the hope that the army of the Republic, which had been engaged in defending the outlying portions of the Florentine territory, might raise the siege, and joining with the forces within the city might yet show such a front to the enemy, as should hold him at bay until some change in the aspect of European affairs might occur to place the actors on the scene in altogether different relations to each other. "They," the Florentines "turned their minds entirely therefore," says Nardi,* "to the expectation of succour to be received at the hands and by the operations of the Commissary Francesco Ferruccio."

Ferruccio had been a captain in the famous Black Bands, and had been trained in the art of war under that great master of it, Giovanni de' Medici, surnamed "Delle Bande Nere." He had manifested in the prosecution of the almost hopelessly difficult task assigned to him of defending the various outlying portions of the Florentine territory

* Istorie di Firenze, di Jacopo Nardi, vol. ii. p. 233, edit. Firenze, 1842.

A.D. 1530. from the attacks of the Imperial and Papal forces extraordinary military resource and skill, and an indefatigable activity and zeal, which unmistakeably assured the Florentines, that if Florentine liberty was to be saved, it would be to Francesco Ferruccio that his country would owe her deliverance. On the 26th of April, by a sudden march from Empoli, he had recovered Volterra from the Imperialist forces; and had greatly raised the spirits and hopes of the besieged by so important a success.

Francesco Ferruccio, however, had conceived the idea of a much larger and bolder scheme of operations for the relief and deliverance of the city; a scheme which would seem to have offered the only discoverable chance of effectually relieving the city from the fate which threatened it. This plan of Ferruccio was nothing less than to cause such a diversion of the war by marching on Rome itself, as should not only draw off the besieging army, but should so effectually change the position of the Pope as to break up all his present plans, together with the understanding that had been concerted between him and the Emperor. His intention was, says Nardi,* "to divert the war from Florence to Rome, as had happened on a former occasion to the advantage of our city by the singular favour of God." His plan was, the same historian goes on to explain, "to imitate the example of the Duke of Bourbon;—to march towards Rome with the utmost possible speed, spreading in every district through which he passed the cry, that he was leading his men to a second sacking and pillage of Rome. He thought, we are told by Jacopo Nardi,† that "a cry and a prospect so alluring to the soldiers of every nationality would find both Germans and Spanish ready and well-disposed to follow him." Very

* Nardi, op. cit. ed. cit., vol. ii. p. 236.

† *Ibid.*, p. 35.

many men of the latter nation were, we are told, roaming about the country plundering the inhabitants indiscriminately, having thrown off all semblance of obedience to the Imperial generals, and having become in short mere banditti. It was hoped also that the army besieging Florence, discontented and unpaid as it was, would not endure to see other soldiers marching to the easy gathering of so rich a harvest of booty and licence, while they remained in quarters which the filthy habits of their encampment and insufficient food had rendered pestilential around the walls of Florence; but would at once break up and follow Ferruccio and the brigand hordes thus to be collected by him, bent only on not being left hindmost in such a race. The plan was a desperate, but not an ill-advised, one. Nardi thinks that it would have succeeded; and that the Imperialist leaders, who had obtained intelligence of the existence of such a scheme, were greatly alarmed by the probability of its success. But the Florentine Signory had not sufficient faith in it to induce them to permit Ferruccio thus to march off southwards, abandoning the more immediate care of protecting, as best he could, such points of the territory of the Republic as were not already in the hands of the enemy. A.D. 1530.

Francesco Ferruccio judged it to be his most imperative duty to obey the constitutional rulers of his country, and the scheme of a march on Rome was abandoned. And in carrying out the policy thus prescribed to him, he exhibited military capacity of the highest order, and a patriotism, that hoped against hope to the last. His activity and indefatigable zeal multiplied the small force under his orders, and all but made it successful in accomplishing the too impossible task entrusted to him. Now at Volterra, now at Empoli, now at Pisa, he flew from end to end of the territory of the Commonwealth, strengthening a garrison here, inflicting a defeat on the enemy there, and

A.D. 1530. again suddenly cutting off the communications of the invaders at some other point.

Had Florence possessed but one or two more such men as Francesco Ferruccio in her native ranks, the issue of the struggle might have been a different one. Had but one other such commanded within the walls of Florence, in the place of the traitor hireling noble Malatesta Baglioni, the gallant little city, despite the monstrous inequality of the contest, might not improbably have kept both Pope and Emperor at bay, until some change in the position of European politics might have caused a diversion. But there was no second Ferruccio!

Looking back on the completed history of this memorable siege, it seems surprising that Baglioni should have been able so cunningly to veil his treasonable purposes as to keep them hidden, if not perhaps altogether from the suspicions, at least from the convictions, of the Signory. It is the more so, that the citizens were by no means in a trustful or unsuspicious frame of mind. Several summary executions took place, of men guilty or supposed to be guilty of treasonable correspondence with the besiegers. One of the most remarkable of these capital condemnations was that of Lorenzo Soderini, followed by his execution in the court of the Bargello on the 4th of July. He was, says the Venetian ambassador,* "a man of much weight, who had held nearly all the principal offices under this government." He was accused of sending continual information of the state of things in the city to the enemy; "the devil having entered into him," as Cambi ingenuously says, "and driven him by the ambition of becoming greater than he was, to become on the contrary a scoundrel and a traitor to his country."

It is not surprising that the citizens were not in a mood

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 304.

to tolerate or to pardon any such offences, or even the suspicion of them. Things were very unmistakeably drawing to a crisis; and the suffering in the city was rapidly reaching a point beyond which further resistance would be impossible. On the 5th, the day after the execution of Soderini, all the light women in the city had been compelled to pass out of it. Their reception by the brutal soldiery who surrounded the walls may be in some degree imagined, but cannot be described. On the following day, the 6th, all the countrymen within the walls —the "contadini," or inhabitants of the surrounding territory,—were sought out and collected from all parts of the city, together with their wives and children, a company of six thousand souls, for the purpose of being sent out from the famine-stricken city. The scene was a piteous one;—so piteous, that at the last moment, though it was of the utmost moment to husband in every way the small quantity of food remaining within the walls, the hearts of the citizens, and especially of the Signory, could not stand the tears and shrinking terror of the poor people thus sentenced to be thrust forth. And it was determined that, come what come might, the citizens and their poor subjects would face the future together. A.D. 1530.

The Venetian ambassador, writing on the 14th of July, gives a list of the famine prices of food within the city. But the citation of one article in his statement will suffice to give an idea of the condition to which the people were reduced. The carcases of mice are quoted at thirteen *soldi* a-piece, a sum equivalent to something more than five shillings at the present day. At the same time he reports that plague had manifested itself in various quarters of the city; "the consternation caused by which is the greater in that no man can either avoid the pestilence by quitting the city, nor make any provision against it by the use of fitting food or medicine, there being a total deficiency of

A.D. 1530. all such things.* Nevertheless," he goes on to say, "so great is the constancy and firmness of mind in every one of the citizens, so unshakeable their obstinate determination to be free, that they have publicly determined to suffer every possible extremity."

But the hapless city had already pretty nearly reached the point of suffering every possible extremity. Many had passed that point; for the mortality within the walls was great. It had become evident, indeed, that unless the Florentines were to remain within their walls, till the last survivor of them should have died of pestilence and famine, some steps, however desperate, must be taken towards escaping from their present position. It was determined accordingly, about the middle of July,† that as soon as Ferruccio, who had received orders to join himself to the Florentine forces in and around Pisa, amounting at that time to five thousand infantry, and five hundred cavalry, should approach the city thus reinforced, a desperate sortie of the entire force within the walls should be made; and a battle fought with the besieging army, "in which the citizens should remain victorious, or lose everything, together with their lives." ‡ It was determined and ordered therefore, "that those who were to be left behind to guard the gates and the defences, should, if they saw that their fellow-citizens were worsted in the fight, immediately put to death with their own hands the women and children, and then, having set fire to the city, go forth to meet the same fate, with those who had preceded them: in such sort that the city should be so destroyed as that nothing should be left but the memory thereof, and of the magnanimity of its inhabitants, and an immortal example to all future

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 306.

† Later than the 10th of that month.—Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, *loc. cit.*

‡ Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, *loc. cit.*

peoples, who having been born free, choose to live in freedom." * A.D. 1530.

But it was not destined that the Florentines should have the opportunity of giving effect to this resolution. Ferruccio never did appear before the walls, or in the rear of the besieging army. The Prince of Orange was too good a general, and too well aware of the danger to his army that would have been caused by such a strategic movement, to wait for the execution of it. He determined on marching himself to meet Ferruccio with a large portion of the forces at his disposal, and fighting him before he could approach sufficiently near to the city for his attack to be combined with a sortie from the walls. It was, however, a very serious matter for the general to leave a half mutinous army, and to weaken it by taking away with him a considerable portion of the best and most trustworthy troops that composed it. It was a step fraught with danger; and would have been highly imprudent, if the Imperialist general had not had the means of assuring himself that his absence would not be taken advantage of by the besieged, to come out from their walls against his weakened army, unsupported by the presence of its chief. But he had this assurance. The fatal Nessus-shirt of hireling treason adhered to the perishing body of Florentine freedom to the last. If only there could have been one other such as Ferruccio commanding within the walls in the stead of the hired traitor Baglioni! But there was no second Ferruccio. And there is irrefutable evidence to show, that before the Prince of Orange decided on quitting the encampment before Florence, to go and meet Ferruccio, he had received an assurance from Baglioni that no attack should be made on his army during his absence.

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, *loc. cit.*

A.D. 1530. Unfortunately too, abundant time had been allowed to the Prince and Baglioni to arrange and mature their plans, by a delay in the movements of Ferruccio, caused by a fever which seized him at Pisa, and detained him there several days. Thus aided, and confiding in the understanding come to with the base traitor who was thus selling the dearest interests of his trusting employers, the Prince of Orange marched to meet the forces under Ferruccio in the hill district behind Pistoia, by which route the latter was endeavouring to reach the neighbourhood of the capital. On the 2nd of August (as we learn from the last of the series of letters written by the Venetian ambassador to his government, dated the 13th of August) it became known to the Signory that the Prince had left the camp with the best part of his army. And of course it was at once apparent that then or never was the moment for the projected sortie. The entire city was, says the Venetian ambassador, "disposed and prepared to go out to fight; a roll-call of eight thousand of the city militia, and of six thousand, two hundred and seventy hired soldiers had been made; twenty-two pieces of field artillery had been made ready; the holy sacrament had been received by all the captains,* at the close of a long procession made barefoot, on the last days of July; the Gonfaloniere, the other magistrates, and a large number of the inhabitants had also received the communion; a great many persons had made their wills; and all was ready for the last desperate cast, which was to decide the future fortunes, and indeed the future existence of Florence.

But at the last moment, "when nothing further stood in the way of the immediate execution of the intended sortie, the citizens were not only prevented from going forth by the captains Malatesta and Colonna, but were not

* It is curious that it does not seem to have been thought at all necessary that the rank and file should share in this devotional exercise.

even permitted to send two thousand infantry to the aid of Ferruccio." * A.D. 1530.

It will be observed that the Venetian implicates Stefano Colonna, the commander of the city militia, in the treason of his rival and superior officer, Malatesta. And Varchi † confirms the accusation, assigning as the motive for Colonna's treason, the anger he had conceived against the Florentines because they had preferred Malatesta to him, as general-in-chief.

During the whole night of the third of August, there was, says the Venetian, the greatest danger of a desperate struggle between the enraged citizens and the followers of Malatesta; the result of which would have been that the imperialist troops would have marched into the city, "and the utter destruction of it would have been the result."

It is to be observed, however, and historical honesty forbids that it should be left unnoticed, that the Venetian ambassador, in saying that Malatesta and Colonna prevented the citizens from going out to fight, adds that they, —the two generals,—"were in possession of the intentions of many of the great (citizens), of the greater part of the city, and of the greater part of the soldiers."

The statement is a very important one. That many of "the great," that is, the wealthier citizens, and especially those well disposed towards the Medici, should have become tired of the war, even if they had ever approved of it, and should have wished to come to terms with the Pope and the Emperor, rather than perish beneath the ruins of the city, is quite what might have been expected. It was well known all along that there were men in the city who were in their hearts partisans of the Pope and the Medici. It is also quite in accordance with all our experience of what has happened and is likely to happen under similar

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 312. † Lib. xi.

A.D. 1530. circumstances, that many of the richer citizens should have become weary of a resistance which they perceived to be vain, and should have been by no means anxious to carry out that determination of dying under the ruins of the city rather than yield. But it is startling to find the ambassador asserting that Malatesta acted in accordance with the wishes of the greater part of the city. It is impossible to suppose that such should have been the case. It is inconsistent with his own repeated statements respecting the enthusiasm and determination of the citizens to endure every extremity rather than consent to the terms the Pope and Emperor wished to impose on them, and the testimony so often recurring in his letters to the very remarkable readiness and cheerfulness with which the repeated calls on the citizens for new contributions to the expenses of the war were paid. It is inconsistent even with the statement to be found a few lines further on in the same letter, to the effect that there was the greatest danger of a violent struggle in the city in consequence of the rage and indignation of the citizens at Malatesta's treachery. For since he had more than six thousand of his own men in the city, if in addition to these the greater part of the citizens had been favourable to the inaction he was determined to maintain, there could have been no possibility of resistance on the part of a minority to the will of a majority backed by six thousand armed men. Possibly the ambassador may have meant to say that "many of the wealthy citizens in the greater part of the city" concurred in the views of Malatesta; *i.e.*, many of the rich men throughout the greater number of the city districts.*

* The words of the Venetian's letter are, "molti de' grandi, della maggior parte della città, e della maggior parte della gente da guerra"; punctuated so by Signor Albèri, the editor of the "Relazioni." But if the comma after the words "de' grandi" were removed, the passage would seem capable of bearing the construction suggested in the text.

Again, what follows in the account of the Venetian ambassador does not seem consistent with the supposition that the majority of the citizens were minded to abandon the struggle. On the morning of the 4th, he goes on to relate, news came to Florence that a battle had been fought between the Prince and the forces of the Commonwealth under Ferruccio, in which the former had fallen. Whereupon the captains, (Malatesta and Stefano Colonna, that is to say,) permitted the citizen troops and a considerable part of the soldiers in the city to go out against the imperialist besieging army; a line of conduct intelligible enough under the circumstances, if we are to suppose that the news received led the captains to begin to bethink them that it might become dangerous for them to persist in resisting the will of the city in this matter; but scarcely intelligible on the supposition, that in preventing the sortie they were acting in conformity with the wishes of the majority of the citizens. A.D. 1530.

We are assured, too, both by the Venetian ambassador and by Varchi, that this permission to make a sortie was merely illusory; that Malatesta knew perfectly well that the imperialist troops left under the walls of Florence had received orders not to fight in case of any sortie attempted by the citizens, but to remain on the defensive within their lines; that in fact nothing came of the sortie, or was intended by the captains to come of it; that it was a mere device for throwing dust in the eyes of the citizens, and gaining time.

Meanwhile, tidings of the real results of the battle between the Prince of Orange and Ferruccio had reached Florence, and produced a sad and terrible fall in the spirits of the citizens, from the renewed hopes which the first news from Pistoia had created to a feeling very near to despair.

On the 3rd of August the battle which decided the fate

A.D. 1530. of Florence had indeed been fought in the mountains above Pistoia, at a village called Gavinana. The ill-omened spot lies high and bleak on the side of the Apennine, within sight of the traveller as he passes, about a mile to the right of it on his way from Pistoia towards Modena. And not a peasant of these mountains, though ignorant as his yoke of dove-coloured oxen of all the history of his country from that day to this, not a goat-herd tending his flock by the road-side, or a grimy muleteer bringing down his string of charcoal-laden beasts from the forests of the upper Apennine, will be found unable to point out to the stranger the field on which, more than three hundred years ago, Tuscan liberty was fought for and lost.

The battle had been fought as the first news of it received at Florence had told. It was true, moreover, that the Prince of Orange had fallen in the fight. But alas! the worser half of the truth remained to be told. Both commanders had fallen; the supporter of might against right shot down in the heat of the battle, and the champion of right against might slain in cold blood after the battle was over. For notwithstanding the death of the imperialist general, the Florentine forces had been entirely routed. And this event, together with Baglioni's treachery at Florence, in fact ended the struggle.

The true tidings of the result of the battle reached Florence on the 5th, and sufficed to assure the traitor Baglioni that he was now master of the situation. He immediately renewed his insistance that envoys should be sent by the city to treat with the imperial general, Don Ferrante Gonzaga, who had succeeded to the Prince of Orange as commander-in-chief of the Emperor's army. Former endeavours on the part of their false general to induce the Signory to take this step had been firmly resisted. But on receiving the fatal news of the death of

Ferruccio and the rout of his army, the Florentine government consented to send messengers with a view to treating for a capitulation. Nevertheless, though the messengers were sent, the despairing determination of the citizens to try a last appeal to arms in their own persons was so strong, that it was decided to go out from the walls against the besiegers before those left in the neighbourhood of Florence should be reinforced by the return of the victorious troops from the Pistoia hills. A solemn oath was administered to the leaders of the city militia to be true to the city government to the last; large promises of rewards were made in case of success; and all was ready for this supreme and desperate effort, when an amount of discord among the citizens manifested itself, which threatened to close the story of the Florentine Commonwealth in a yet more disastrous and less creditable manner than its forcible extinction by the hands of tyrants. A small number, not above two hundred, of the city militia, betaking themselves to "the other,"—*i.e.*, the southern side of the Arno—declared themselves supporters of Baglioni, and determined to resist the attempt to make the contemplated sortie against his wishes. The Signory therefore at once determined formally to deprive Baglioni of his command, and sent Messer Andreol Niccolini to him with an intimation to that effect. It seems surprising that the city government should have conceived itself still strong enough to take this step with any expectation of obtaining any advantage from it. And the result very shortly showed how much more correctly Baglioni appreciated the situation, in considering himself as completely master of it and of the city. A.D. 1530.

When Messer Andreol Niccolini appeared before Baglioni, and intimated to him the order of the Signory, that he should render up the general's staff which had been entrusted to him, he laid the envoy dead at his feet with

A.D. 1530. his dagger,* saying, as he thrice repeated the blow, "Go back to your masters, and tell them that they shall in spite of themselves make submission to the Pope!"†

This, as he well knew, was what the city was, above all else, anxious to avoid doing; preferring very much to fall into the hands of the Emperor, and to trust to the mercy of a lay man and a foreigner, rather than to that of a Pope and a Medici.

Having thus received the orders of the really impotent Signory to lay down his command, the now at last confessed traitor sent to the Papal commissary outside the walls, telling him to prepare for marching into the city with his troops, and forthwith proceeded to take forcible possession of the gates of the city, displacing the city guards, and replacing them by his own men.

When the tidings of the manner in which the orders of the Signory had been received by their general were brought back to the Palazzo Vecchio, the Gonfaloniere was already on horseback for the purpose of riding through the city, and animating the citizens to make that last supreme attempt which had been contemplated. But on the arrival of the messenger bringing those tidings many of the leading citizens surrounded the Gonfaloniere and dissuaded him from his purpose, "and with good reason," says the Venetian ambassador, "since, although the city militia had taken possession of the bridges, and barricaded them, and had placed artillery on them, the hired soldiers on the other hand, for the most part, stood by their own commander, and were on both sides of the Arno ready for battle. So that not only any smallest beginning of a contest, but even the mere appearance of the Gonfaloniere, must have been followed by a most terrible fight in the streets of the city, to the utter destruction thereof;—a

* Varchi, lib. xi. † Nardi, Istorie di Firenze, *loc. cit.*

spectacle all but sure to have been realised, and yet too shocking and fearful to think of." A.D. 1530.

The result was that the Signory that same evening appointed Zanobio Bartolini, as sole commissary, to arrange terms with Malatesta; a man who had only a day or two previously been removed from the government in consequence of suspicions attaching to his loyalty to the cause of Florence. And the choice of such a man is abundant evidence that the city now considered the contest to be at an end, and the cause of freedom to have been lost.

Such was indeed the truth. The so long coming, inevitable catastrophe had been reached at last; and this story of four centuries of ever-failing, continually renewed attempts to establish an endurable system of self-government has come to an end.

There was much danger that the unhappy city would even yet not escape the horror and the havoc of sack and pillage at the hand of an unspeakably brutalised soldiery. "No confidence can be felt in the safety of the city," says the Venetian, "until the army shall have been sent away, so great is their desire for a sack. In the course of last night (the 12th of August) there was fighting in the streets in three different places, and the soldiers outside attempted to make their way in. But the captain (Malatesta) does not fail in all diligence for the protection of the city." Intelligibly enough, as Signor Albèri remarks in a note to the "Relation" of the Venetian,* inasmuch as Clement VII. "did not wish to reign over the corpse of a slaughtered city. Malatesta was answerable to him for the safety of the city, and the keeping of the promises made by the Pope to him would depend on his securing this."

* Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti, serie ii. vol. i. p. 317.

A.D. 1530. Florence therefore was saved from material destruction, in order that she might be handed over to her future owner in a profitable condition. Of course every kind of stipulation which could reassure the vanquished but still reluctant citizens as to their future prospects and condition was easily made. For they were dealing with an adversary whom no promises or treaties, howsoever solemn, could bind, and to whom the cost in any sort of freeing himself from all such bonds was absolutely nothing.

The first clause in the articles of capitulation ran thus:

"*Imprimis.* The form of the government is to be regulated and established within four months by his Imperial Majesty, IT BEING ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD THAT LIBERTY IS TO BE PRESERVED."*

The anxiety of the citizens even at that supreme moment to throw themselves into the hands, and on the mercy of the Emperor, rather than into those of the Pope, their countryman, is very noteworthy.

The other nine articles of the capitulation refer to the restoration of all citizens in exile on account of their Medicean sympathies; to the moneys to be found by the city for the payment of the Imperial and Papal army; to the giving of hostages by the citizens for the due performance of their part of the contract; to the transference of the services of Baglioni and Stefano Colonna from the city to the Emperor, and their continuance in the city till all the conditions of the treaty had been fulfilled; to the assuring of free permission to any citizen who might wish to reside in Rome to do so unmolested; to the giving back to the Florentine government of all the places and lands which had been taken by the victorious army; to the removal of the army as soon as ever it should have

* "INTENDENDO SEMPRE, CHE SIA SERVATA LA LIBERTA."

received its pay; and to promises of mutual amnesty and remission of all pains and penalties on either side. A.D. 1530.

It was quite a matter of course, and it is hardly necessary to say, that Pope Clement proceeded, immediately on getting the unhappy city into his hands, to violate in the most unblushing manner almost every one of the promises made in these stipulations. It is only a matter of surprise that any man in Florence should for an instant have dreamed that he would do otherwise. With regard to the main and all-important condition, which guaranteed the preservation of the freedom of the city, the Emperor was of course equally false and forsworn with the Pope. For we know that the whole object of his war against the Commonwealth, and his alliance with the Pope, was the reduction of the city to the condition of a principality for his illegitimate daughter Margaret, and her proposed husband, the Pope's illegitimate son Alexander de' Medici. But the details of the crushing tyranny which, in shameless violation of the sworn treaty, made the citizens the cowering slaves of the Pope and the Pope's bastard son, and the vile band of that son's minions and creatures, and prepared them for that unspeakably corrupt and degraded existence of three hundred years of despotism which followed; the atrocious cruelties devised to glut Medicean vengeance; the calculated and purposed demoralization of the citizens, accomplished with a skill that no layman's brain or heart could have reached, and no layman's power have put in execution; all this was the special province and characteristic work of a Medicean Pope.

The story of the Commonwealth of Florence has been told.

If the annals of that stormy but still prolific life have seemed to us, in the contemplation of them, to have left to the subsequent generations of mankind a larger legacy of

A.D. 1530. warning than of example; if faults, follies, and aberrations have seemed to invite our censure more frequently and more prominently than the nobleness of aim and effort has awakened our admiration, let us not forget the vantage-ground from which we look back on and judge these pioneers in the path of social organization. If the curtain falls on this drama of four centuries of perplexed effort and very partially intelligent struggling in the darkness of total failure, as we saw from an early period of the action that it needs must fall, let us remember that no heroic striving, no noble aim, no high aspiration is frustrated or defrauded of its progeny of good to man, even though it has never been crowned by what we call success, or has attained the end at which it was aimed.

The world is still a heavy debtor to that sorely troubled old Florence. There was much of the best and the noblest in its aims and objects; very much that was worthy of all admiration and sympathy in acts done and suffered. Our story of these four centuries has not been an unchequered one. But that which relates the sad but not uninstructive history of the succeeding three centuries would be really unchequered by a ray of light; as dismally uniform a tale of progressive deterioration and decay as any portion of the annals of mankind can offer. But the maleficent purposes and evil aims of those bad times have also ended in failure, as they too must needs have ended. For amelioration *is* the universal law. At however unfavourable a moment in the national life of any people the observer may take his stand-point, still it is true that the good time is to be looked for, not in the past, but in the future. The wave may retire, but the tide comes on. And the conviction that so it has been, and so will continue to be, is faith in God,—the only faith that can justify His ways to man.

APPENDIX.*

Heads of Agreement entered into between the city of Florence and King Charles VIII. of France, on the 25th of November, in the year 1494.

In Dei nomine, amen. Anno domini nostri Jesu Christi ab ipsius salutifera incarnatione millesimo quadruigentesimo nonagesimo quarto, indictione tertiadecima, die xxv mensis novembris. Actum in populo Sancti Laurentii de Florentia, in domo haeredum Laurentii de Medicis de Florentia, praesentibus testibus ad infrascripta omnia et singula vocatis, habitis et rogatis, cum clarissimo artium et medicinae doctore magistro Theodoro Guanieno cive Papiensi, consiliario et physico ordinario infrascriptae Regiae Maiestatis, et Nerio Giui de Capponibus cive Florentino, et ser Bartolomeo Dominici ser Joannis de Bindis cive et notario publico Florentino, nec non consiliario infrascriptae Christianissimae Regiae Maiestatis.

Cum hoc sit, quod mensibus elapsis, causa nonnullorum civium civitatis Florentiae, qui malo ducti consilio Christianissimae Regiae Maiestati adversabantur ne Regia sua Maiestas posset suam instissimam impresiam exequi, quam sua Christianissima Maiestas facit pro recuperatione sui regni Neapolitani, eadem Christianissima Maiestas moveril bellum Dominis florentinis, nonnullaque oppida vi ceperit, aliaque sua sponte se dediderunt; et advertens sua Christianissima Maiestas, quod semper populus florentinus fuit, est et semper erit suae Christianissimae Maiestatis, suorumque predecessorum devotissimus, volens cum eis, prout decet magnanimum principem, clementissime agere, et cuique ostendore animum suum non esse aliena occupare sed sua recuperare; hinc est quod sua Christianis-

* See note, p. 83, vol. iv.

sima Maiestas ex parte una, et clarissimi viri dominus Giudantonius Joannis de Vespuccis, dominus Dominicus Baldassaris de Bousis, cives et advocati florentini, et spectabiles viri Franciscus Philippi de Valoribus, et Petrus Giui de Capponibus, cives florentini, tanquam syndici et procuratores excelsorum dominorum Priorum libertatis et vexilliferi institiae populi florentini, ex parte altera, devenerunt ad infrascriptam conventionem ; videlicet :

Primo : adverteus praefata sua Regia Maiestas, quod omnia quae hactenus contra suam Regiam Maiestatem facta sunt, fuerunt gesta malo consilio, persuasu ac metu ; et quia quae metus causa facta sunt, nullius roboris firmitatem obtinent, nec facientibus imputari debent, minusque nocere ; et quia Deus, in cuius manu corda principium sunt, et cuius principes ipsi vicarii et vicemgerentes sunt, piissimas, misericordes ac clementissimas manus suas eum requirentibus porrigit, nec cuiquam ad eum venienti fores claudit, sed dona, munera, clementiam ac misericordiam compartitur ; et quod sic ipsi principes facere debent, cum christianorum omnis actio eorum debeat esse instructio ; cumque principes deceat solertem reipublicae ac libertatis curam gerere, et subditorum et amicorum et confoederatorum concordiam investigare, ut regni sui et amicorum utilitas et libertas persistat, et euis status, subditorum et amicorum ingiter servetur illaesus ; idcirco sua Christianissima Maiestas, devotissimi sui populi florentini precibus mota, omnia acta et perpetrata contra suam Christianissimam Maiestatem oblivioni tradit; reducitque dictum populum florentinum in eo statu, et gratia suae Christianissimæ Maiestatis, prout et sicut erat ante dicta perpetrata contra suam Rigiam Maiestatem.

Secondo : advertens sua Christianissima Maiestas, quod Carolus Magnus huius urbis fuit primus restaurator, et nominis Florentiae in Florentiam mutator, locorumque et oppidorum et arcium dator, moeniumque constructor, et templorum aliquorum huius inclytæ urbis aedificator, verae Sanctae Crucis, et aliarum reliquiarum acornamentorum templo sancti Joannis et aliis largitor ; et quod sua Christianissima Maiestas libertatis huius civitatis restaurator, pastor, conservator et defensor et sua benignitate fuit, ac etiam omnium tyranorum fugator ; adeo quod merito ipse Christianissimus Rex Carolus octavus maior et maximus dici mereatur praesertium a propulo florentino ; idcirco convenerunt, ut ipse Carolus et successores sui, semper et omni tempore, pater patriae nostrae, ac populi Florentini tutor, protector, defensor, et libertatis nostrae conservator, ac eius tyranorum fugator appelletur ; et in introitu Dominorum florentinorum, et in eorum iuramento semper nominetur pater

patriae, et conservator et protector nostrae libertatis: cum ipse Carolus sub verbo regio polliceatur se fore semper conservatorem huius libertatis, et fugatorem tyrannorum eiusdem, et patrem patriae.

Tertio convenerunt: quod civitas Pisarum, et arx, una cum oppido et arce Liburni, remaneant in manibus dictae Regiae Maiestatis, illasque retinere possit durante sua impresia regni Neapolitani, iurisdictione tamen, dominio et fructibus Dominis florentinis remanentibus sicut antea; finita vers dicta impresia, promisit praefata Regia Maiestas statim praedicta omnia et singula restituere republicae florentinae, vel eius syndicis, seu syndicis, omni exceptione, seu impensarum aliquarum restitutione remota, salvis iuribus aliorum; cum omnibus suis munitionibus, bombardis, spingardis, masseritiis, et instrumentis quibuscumque, ad consolationem dilectissimi et devotissimi sui populi florentini, el ad eius honorem, et dignitatem conservandam. Et ut omnes intelligant, voluntatem regiam in illis retinendis esse duntaxat ad suae Maiestatis; et sui exercitus securitatem et commoditatem, non autem ad florentini populi detrimentum; et quoad hunc effectum intelligatur, impresia finita statim, postque urbe Neapolitana potita fuerit sua Regia Maiestas, vel casu quo quoquomodo sua Maiestas super tali impresia regni Neapolitani transegerit seu composuerit, sive per pacem, sive per longas indutias duorum anuorum aut amplius, aut quocumque alis modo, vel etiam quocumque causa eadem sua Maiestas ab Italia recederet, aut in ea esse desierit; et si accideret indutias fieri biennium, et Christianissimam suam Maiestatem ab Italia recedere, non intelligatur finita impresia per huiusmodi recessum, durantibus dictis indutiis factum, dummodo dicta sua Christianissima Maiestas durante dicto biennio in Italiam revertatur ad dictam impresiam: et quod interim, durante dicta impresia, fiant binae claves dictae civitatis Pisarum, quarumunam retinere debeat deputatus a Regia Maiestate, aliam vero retinere debeant officialis Dominorum florentinorum, pro aperiendis et claudendis dictis portis, horis et modis consuetis.

Quarto: quia cives pisani in adventu dictae Regiae Maiestatis voluerunt proclamare in libertatem, et se eripere a ditione florentina, insignoique et arma eorum delevirunt, multaque alia perpetraverunt (ut fertur), concordatum et actum extitit, quodomnia quae dicta, acta et gesta per dictos Pisanos, tam in comuni quam in particulari, fuerunt, indulgebuntur, atquae remittentur ipsis Pisanis: et ex nunc dicti Domini florentini remittunt atque indulgent, absque es quod aliquod damnum in personis aut in bonis eorum possit inferri; et nihilomnius etiam dicti Domini florentini tractabunt eos honeste. Et si forte superioribus temporibus fuerint aut multitudine vectiga-

lium aut gravedinum oppressi, dicti Florentini moderabunt dicta vectigalia, habita qualitate locorum et personarum, prout dictis Dominis florentinis libere visum fuerit: et casu quo dicti Domini florentini hac de causa rebellionis per eos factæ innovarent aliquid contra personas vel bona dictorum Pisanorum, ex nunc liceat dictae Regiae Maiestati providere, prout mae Regiae Maiestati placuerit.

Quinto etiam convenerunt: quod civitas Serzanae, et arces dictae civitatis, et Serzanilla, et arx et oppidum Petrae Sanctae, remaneant etiam in manibus dictae Regiae Maiestatis durante dicta sua impresia; fructibus tamen, iurisdictione, dominis et institia eorundem ipsis Dominis florentinius remanentibus. Et quia Tanuenses, quorum dictus Christianissimus Rex est dominus supremus, fecirunt multa servitia atque obsequia eidem in dicta sua impresia, qui Januenses praetendunt se habere ius in dicta civitate Serzanae et oppido Petrae Sanctae, dictorumque dominorum Florentinorum praefatus Christianissimus Rex est protector; volens et cupiens tollere dissensiones et discordias quae sunt inter dictos Florentinas et Januenses, procurabit eos reducere ad concordiam et pacem, per amicitiam aut per institiam, omni vi et violentia sublatis: et casu quo non poterit dictos ad dictam concordiam et pacem per amicitiam reducere, aut per institiam ut supra, dicta sua Regia Maiestas, statim finita dicta impresia, dictas arces civitatum et oppida dictis Dominis florentinis restituet, cum omnibus suis munitionibus, bombardis, spingardis, masseritiis et instrumentis quibuscumque, omni exceptione, aut impensarum aliquarum restitutione remota, salvis iuribus aliorum: et impresia dicatur esse finita prout supra, in articulo faciente mentionem de civitate Pisarum et oppido Liburni, dictum est; declarantes, quod dicta Regia Maiestas omnes supradictas arces tam Liburni et civitatis Pisarum, quam Petrae Sanctae, Serzanae et Serzanillae, durante impresia praedicta, retinere possit, ut supra, suis tamen propriis expensis.

Sexto convenerunt: quod quicumque custodes ac castellani, qui durante dicta impresia fuerint pro tempore positi per dictam Regiam Maiestatem in arcibus supradictis, debeant iurare, et se in omni meliori modo et forma quibus dictis Dominis florentinis videbitur, obligare, se restituturos dictas arces et oppida populo florentino, secundum quod supra promissum est, nihilque pro restitutione huiusmodi petituros a republica florentina; ac etiam iurare et promittere debeant, se non daturos dictas arces et oppida alicui successori, nisi prius ipse successor, sive successores promittant, et se obligent, et iurent, se omnia de huiusmodi arcibus et oppidis, et carum et corum restitutione observaturos, modo et forma praedictis.

Septimo convenerunt: quod dicta sua Regia Maiestas durante dicta sua impresia possit retinere duos deputatos in dicta civitate Florentiae, suis tamen expensis, qui debeant omnia occurentia dictae Regiae Maiestati comunicare cum dictis Dominis florentinis, vel aliis eorum magistratibus super hoc deputatis, vel aliis cum quibus voluerit, tanquam cum bonis et veris amicis, qui poterunt intrare et intelligere in omnibus eorum consiliis; et non tractabunt neque concludent aliqua concoruentia statum aut negocia dictae Regiae Maiestatis, regnorum suorum, aut suae impresiae, nisi eis vocatis. Reliqua vero negocia privata vel publica dicti Florentini possuit concludere more eorum solits, absque eo quod teneantur vocare dictos deputatos, nisi eis videatur; et hoc durante dicta impresia, sicut dictum est.

Octavo convenerunt: quia durante dicta impresia posset oriri quaestio intergentes armorum dictae Regiae Maiestatis quas in dictis locis reliquisset, ex una, et habitantis in ipsis quoscumque, ex alia; et ne gentes dictae Regiae Maiestatis molestent aut dictis aut factis habitantes dictorum locorum; quod eadem Regiae Maiestas committat Capitaneum in dictis arcibus Pisarum, Liburni, Petrae Sanctae et Serzanae, pro partibus et stationibus eorundem, qui erit eius locumtenens generalis in locis praedictis, qui poterit manere in civitate Florentiae, aut alibi, prout ei videbitur: cui communicabunter omnia negocia conceruentia statum Regiae Maiestatis, ut prius dictum est, et poterit communicare omnia negocia conceruentia factum guerrae, per amicitiam et non per subiectionem; et habebit dictus Capitaneus Regiae Maiestatis potestatem puniendi delinquentes homines suos morantes in dictis civitatibus, castris et locis.

Nono convenerunt: quod dicti Domini florentini, durante dicta impresia, quae intelligatur finita ut supra, non eligent sibi Capitaneum armorum generalem, nisi primo facta collatione cum Regia Maiestate, ut facilius hoc modo habeatur pro Capitaneo homo gratus suae Regiae Maiestati.

Decimo: praefata Regia Maiestas promittit restituere, et ex nunc restituit dicto populo florentino omnia et singula alia castra, oppida, villas, loca et civitates, per quemcumque hodie possideantur, quae quocumque modo fuerunt possessa per dictum populum florentinum ante eius adventum in Italiam; ita quod dictus populus florentinus in illis libere dominari, omnimodamque institiam ministrare, omnesque redditus percipere, ac ea omnia custodire possit, suoque nutu ac voluntate libere gubernare, prout antea poterat. Et quia possibile esset aliqua ex dictis locis restitutis per hanc praesentum concordiam nolle obtemperare regiis praeceptis, convenerunt, quod dicta Regia Maiestas Christianissima debeat facere literas patentes

quibuscumque locis, arcibus et castris, et eorum populis et comunitatibus, qui seu quae erant subditaepopulo florentino ante adventum suae Regiae Maiestatis, ut debeant se reponere in eius statu et iurisdictione, prout et sicut erant ante adventum dictae suae Regiae Maiestatis. Et casu quo se non reposuerint, et non acceptaverint officiales florentinos, tunc liceat Dominis florentinis vi etiam adtracta compellere huiusmodi renitentes ad parendum literis suae Christianissimae Regiae Maiestatis; promitteus etiam sua Regia Maiestas praestare dictis Dominis florentinis omne auxilium sibi possibile.

Undecimo: promiserunt praefati syndici, etiam restitutis supradictis arcibus et oppidis, quod quandocumque Regia Maiestas praedicta vellet redire in Galliam cum exercitu suo, vel ex Gallia redire ad dictam impresiam regni Neapolitani, tradere sibi passum, et victualiam, suis tamen ipsius Regiae Maiestatis expensis.

Duodecimo: promittit Regia Maiestas, per se et successores suos, florentinam urbem et florentinum populum, eiusque dominium in perpetuum protegere, defendere et ampliare; omniumque amicorum eius amicum et benivolum, inimicorumque inimicum esse; et quod in quibuscumque ligis et foederibus, cum quibuscumque regibus, principibus, ducibus, marchionibus, comitibus, comunitatibus et rebuspublicis, fiendis, eam et eum comprehendet; ac etiam cum inimicis suis quibuscumque, et maxime cum Januensibus, quorum praefata Regia Maiestas supremis est dominus, pacem perpetuam procurabit, prout supra dictum est; ut tandem possit dicta florentina respublica, et eius populus, omnesque eius subditi, tute et libere navigare, et eorum merces et bona, quo voluerint, per tenam et per mare ire, devehi et navigari facere: et e converso dicti Domini florentini promittunt habere amicos dictae Regiae Maiestatis pro amicis, et inimicos pro inimicis, et non facere aliquam ligam seu confoederationem cum inimicis dictae Regiae Maiestatis.

Decimo tertio: promittit dicta Regia Maiestas, tanquam verno pastor, conservator, tutor, ac defensor, et protector, et perpetuus pater nostrae patriae, concedere, et ex nunc concedit omnibus Florentinis, et eorum subditis, tam praesentibus quam futuris, plenum, liberum et perpetuum salvum conductum; ita quod libere possuit, nunc et in futurum, in quibuscumque sue Regiae Maiestatis regnis, ducatibus, comitatibus, villis, castris, oppidis, marchionatibus, et principatibus, tam acquisitis quam acquirendis, tute et libere, semel et pluries, ire et redire, cum eorum mercibus, mercantiis, et rebus quibuscumque, et pannis sericis et aureis; et mercari, et mercari facere, et nomina debitorum tam praesentia quam futura exigere; resque et merces eorum, cuiuscumque speciei, materiei et qualitatis

existant, etiam quae ad praesens, tam in dicto regno Neapolitano quam alibi, existunt, vel quae in futurum existent, portare et exportare, et portari et exportari facere, tam per terram quam per mare; ita quod Florentinorum navigia gallica esse intelligantur, et tanquam veri et naturales Galli utantur, et frui possuit quibuscumque Gallorum immunitatibus et privilegiis, prout hactenus consueverunt: et possuit etiam, in quocumque loco tam acquisito quam acquirendo per dictam suam Regiam Maiestatem, contractus emptionum, venditionum, permutationum, emphiteoticarios, et quascumque obligationes facere et contrahere; bona mobilia, castraque et iurisditiones acquirere, vendireque, et donare possuit; ac etiam in omnibus praedictis locis testari, codicillari, et causa mortis et inter vivos donare, pro eorum libito voluntatis, in perpetuum; ita quod in bonis ibidum existentibus succedatur eis secundum formam et dispositionem statutorum florentinorum: et quoad huic effectum, promittit etiam dicta Regia Maiestas literas patentes naturalitatis dare pro libito voluntatis petentis: et possuit ubique etiam beneficia et dignitates ecclesiasticas quascumque obtinere, ac si veri et naturales Galli nati essent, et quos inter Gallos suos ex nunc dicta Regia Maiestas communerat, et communeri vult, de plenitudine suae Christianissimae dominicae potestatis: promitteus etiam dicta Regia Maiestas, si ipis Dominis florentinis videbitur et placebit, omnia praedicta et infrascripta in omnibus parlamentorum curiis confirmari facere, ac publici banniri per omnia suae Maiestatis regna, et loca quaecumque, et literas patentes cuique facere; maxime ut notum sit omnibus suis subditis, de plenitudine potestatis suae Florentinos, et eorum subditos, vere naturales Gallos effectos esse.

Decimo quarto: vult dicta Regia Maiestas, in signum evidentioris praefatae conservationis, tutaminis, protectionis et ampliationis, et ut quibuscumque sit notum et manifestum, quod pater huius patriae, verus et manifestus conservator, et libertatis huius ampliator existet, et quorumcumque perpetuus tyrannorum fugator, prout sui praedecessores semper fuerint; et ad perpetuam rea memoriam de eius in hanc urbem felicissimo adventu, et de restaurata libertate; quod dicta respublica florentina possit in portis urbium, civitatum, villarum, castrorum, oppidorum, arcium, palatiorum, navium, biremium, triremium, carovellarum, et quarumcumque aliarum qualitatum navigiorum, etiam per eos ab aliis noligiatorum sive conductorum, deferre, affigere et portare, et affigi, deferri et portari facere arma, vexilla et banderias, quorum seu quarum campus sit azzuneus, liliis giallis, sive croceis, seu aureis seminatus, cum banda sculpta vel pieta seu recamata, in qua scripta sit LIBERTAS literis aureis.

Decimo quinto: quia dicta Regia impresia cedit ad commune commodum, ac etiam pro dictae conservationis libertatis munere, promittunt praefati syndici, nomine quo supra, in auxilium praefati Christianissimi Regis ad recuperandum suum regnum Neapolitanum, ex eorum mera liberalitate, donare et solvere dicto Christianissimo Domino Regi, seu eius legiptimo procuratori, summam et quantitatem florenorum centum viginti millium auri et in auro largorum, temporibus et terminis infrascriptis; videlicit, quadraginta millia infra quindecim dies proxime futuros, quinquaginta millia per totom mensem martii proxime futuri, et triginta millia per totum mensem iunii proxime futuri.

Decimo sesto: praefati syndici, precibus Christianissimae Regiae Maiestatis moti, qui ob suam clementiam hoc petiit, promiserunt revocare tagliam seu praemium quod dicti eorum principales promiserunt interficienti Petrum de Medicis, seu ei qui ipsum caperet et vivum traderet dictis Dominis florentinis; et ita ex nunc dictam tagliam seu praemium revocaverunt, et promiserunt etiam banniri facere dictam revocationem per publicum praeconem in civitate Florentiae, et per loca pubblica et consueta dictae civitatis.

Decimo septimo: quia dictus Petrus de Medicis fuit factus et declaratus rubellus dictae civitatis Florentiae, ex qua rebellione poterat impune offendi, et omnia eius bona confiscabantur, et erant ipso iure, et secundum formam statutorum dictae civitatis confiscata; moti etiam precibus praefatae Christianissimae Regiae Maiestatis, quae omnibus indulgeri desiderat, promiserunt praefati syndici dictam poenam rebellionis, et omnia quae sequuntur huiusmodi rebellionem revocare, et ex nunc ita revocant, et facere et curare quod per Consilia populi et comunis Florentiae, et omni validiori modo, prout de iure requiritur, dicta revocatio confirmabitur.

Decimo octavo: promiserunt dicti syndici, quod dicti eorum principales non imponent aliam poenam dicta Petro de Medicis pro delictis usque nunc perpetratis, quam poenam relegationis, seu proscriptionis; ni qua poena nullo modo venit confiscatio bonorum, ipso Petro servante relegationem seu proscriptionem: quae relegatis sic debeat esse in effectis, videlicet quod dictus Petrus de Medicis non debeat adhaerere confinibus territorii florentini per centum miliaria, sub poena in quam incursunt confinati seu relegati florentini de anno M.CCC.XXXIIII., nisi eo existenti cum Christianissima Regia Maiestate; quo casu possit permanere et morari ni quocunque loco erit praefata Regia Maiestas, extra tamen territorium florentinum: hoc etiam excepto et salvo, quod si dictus Petrus de Medicis, pro una vice tantum, viet per territorium florentinum, et per eam viam per

quam ipsum ducent mazzerius et commissarius Dominorum florentinorum, ut inveniat praefatam Regiam Maiestatem, et cum ea sit, per hoc non intelligatur rupisse confinia, et incidesse in poenam ni quam incidebant nunpentes confinia, et relegati de anno M.CCC.XXXIIII.

Decimo nono: promittit dicta Regia Maiestas nullam requisitionem facere dictis Dominis florentinis de liberando dictum Petrum de Medicis a dicta relegatione, de qua supra, nisi elapsis quatuor mensibus ab hodie, Elapsis vero dictis quatuor mensibus, vult dicta Regia Maiestas sibi licere rogare dictos Dominos florentinos pro liberatione praedicta: quo casu dicti Domini florentini teneantur ponere ad partitum inter ipsos Dominos, et Collegia, et eorum Consilia, quae sunt necessaria pro eius restitutione, et secundum formam statutorum dictae civitatis, et non aliter: et si fuerit, et prout fuerit obtentum, ipsum Petrum debere restitui, seu liberari a dicta relegatione, tunc sit licitum dicto Petro impune redire ad dictam civitatem Florentiae, et eius territorium; sui autem non fuerit obtentum, tunc ei non liceat redire; quia in effectu praefata Christianissima Regia Maiestas, tanquam conservatrix humis reipublicae florentinae, nihil aliud vult nec quaerit, nisi ut populus florentium conservetur ni sua dignitate et libertate, et ipsum augere.

Vigesimo convenerunt: quod debeat revocare, et ita ex nunc dicti syndici revocant tagliam impositam Reverendissimo Cardinali, et Juliano de Medicis, de occidendo eos, vel dando eos vivos; ac etiam poenam rebellionis, dempta tamen confiscatione bonorum, nisi primo satisfacto creditoribus dicti Petri de Medicis, quibuscumque nominibus ipse Petrus esset obligatus, ac etiam creditoribus propriis, vel haereditariis ipsorum domini Cardinalis et Juliani, vel qui eis vel alicui eorum crediderit: ipsis tamen domino Cardinali et Juliano remanentibus in relegatione per centum miliaria ab urbe florentina, in omnibus et per omnia prout de Petro eorum fratre dispositum est.

Vigesimo primo convenerunt: quod sit licitum dominae Alphonsinae, uxori dicti Petri de Medicis, redire in domum habitationis dicti Petri, et in illa habitare, absque tamen preiudicio aliquo creditorum dicti Petri de Medicis.

Vigesimo secundo convenerunt: quod de bonis dicti Petri de Medicis debeat de praesenti satisfieri dictae dominae Alphonsinae, uxori dicti Petri, de dote ipsius dominae Alphonsinae.

Vigesimo tertio convenerunt: quod fiat, et fieri debeat inventarium de bonis mobilibus dicti Petri, et quod ipsa bona deponantur penes duos mercatores idoneos; unum videlicet eligendum per ipsam dominam Alphonsinam, et alium per dominos Priores florentinos;

qui electi retineant huiusmodi bona in capsis, si ibidem reponi poterunt, vel alibi in loco tuto, et clandantur sub clavibus, quarum unam retineat dicta domina Alphonsina, aliam vero dicti domini Priores: hoc pacto, quod si infra trimestre creditores existentes in territoris florentino, et infra semestre creditores existentes extra territorium florentinum, eorum indici competenti possexeruit petitiones eorum, per quas appareat petitiones eorum transcendere valorem huiusmodi bonorum mobilium, tunc dicta bona remaneant penes dictos depositarios pro satisfaciendo dictis creditoribus de eorum creditis legiptime probandis: si vero non excederent valorem dictorum bonorum, tunc tantum pro rata huiusmodi creditorum remaneant penes dictos depositarios pro satisfaciendo ut supra; residuum vero restituatur dictae uxori, habenti mandatum legiptimum ab ipso Petro, et a fratribus suis: salvo tamen iure aliorum creditorum non petentium infra dictos terminos.

Vigesimo quarto convenerunt: quod liceat dicto domino Cardinali de Medicis percipere fructus quorumcumque beneficiorum suorum.

Vigesimo quinto convenerunt: quod dictus Petrus de Medicis, vel dicti sui fratres, non possuit declarari debitores alicuius personae, collegii, societatis, magistratus, vel universitatis, nisi facta citatione ad domum eorum solitae habitationis in civitate Florentiae; qui possuit per procuratorem comparere, et se defendere, et omnia eorum iura deducere et allegare.

Vigesimo sexto convenerunt: quod filius masculus dicti Petri de Medicis possit Florentiam redire, et eum dicta domina Alphonsina eius matre morari, stare et alimentari, absque aliquo praeindicio.

Vigesimo septimo convenerunt: quod dicta domina Alphonsina possit retinere quoscumque suos consuetos servitores, dummodo non possit mittere ad Petrum eius virum nisi duos, quos tamen debeat nominare. Quae omnia et singula suprascripta, praefata Christianissima Regia Maiestas, sub verbo et fide regia, attendere et observare promisit, sub obligatione sui et suorum haeredum et successorum, et bonorum praesentium et futurorum: et praefati syndici promiserunt, ac etiam, ad delationem mei Francisci notarii publici infrascripti, imaverunt ad sancta Dei evangelia, scripturis corporaliter manu tactis, praedicta omnia et singula et attendere et observare, sub obligatione dictorum suorum principalium, et dicti populi florentini, et eius bonorum praesentium et futurorum: rogantes praefatae partes me Franciscum iam dictum, et infrascriptum notarium, ut de praedictis publicum conficerem documentum, unum seu plura.

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